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THE LIFE OF JOHNSON

JAMES BOSWELL

Christopher Hibbert was described by Raymond Mortimer as 'a gloriously versatile writer who succeeds also in being scholarly', by Professor J. H. Plumb as 'a writer of the highest ability' and in the *New Statesman* as 'a pearl of biographers'. His books include *The Destruction of Lord Raglan* (Heinemann Award for Literature in 1962), *Garibaldi and his Enemies*, *The Court at Windsor*, *The Making of Charles Dickens*, *The Rise and Fall of the House of Medici*, and biographies of Mussolini, Charles I, George IV and Edward VII. His latest book is *The Great Mutiny: India 1857*. His *Personal History of Samuel Johnson* was published in 1971 and in 1979 he was elected President of the Johnson Society.

JAMES BOSWELL

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EDITED AND ABRIDGED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
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INTRODUCTION

Two or three years ago readers of *The Times Literary Supplement* were entertained by one of those quarrels that occasionally erupt in its correspondence columns. The provocation was an article by the distinguished Johnsonian scholar, Professor Donald Greene, who, while purporting to review John Wain's recently published *Samuel Johnson*, took the opportunity of delivering a bitter, not to say intemperate, attack upon James Boswell whose own biography, the Professor had already proposed, should be 'revealed'.

In the renewed assault Boswell was taken severely to task for having been chiefly responsible for forging the 'iron' curtain which has fallen between the increasingly complex and sympathetic Johnson discovered by scholarship and the immutable Great Cham known to the 'general reader'. Professor Greene went on to quote with approval Edmund Wilson's description of Boswell as 'a vain and pushing diarist'; and to suggest that Boswell's *Life of Johnson* 'can hardly be termed a biography at all', being merely 'a collection of those entries in Boswell's diaries dealing with the occasions during the last twenty-two years of Johnson's life on which they met ... strung together with only a perfunctory effort to fill the gaps'.

'The preposterously inflated reputation of Boswell's work,' Donald Greene continued in growing indignation,

began with a well-organized press campaign, by Boswell and his friends, of puffing and of denigration of his rivals; and was given a boost by one of Macaulay's most memorable pieces of journalistic claptrap ('Eclipse is first, the rest nowhere', etc.); and is sustained by the band of modern scholars who have invested their professional energies in the editing of Boswell's colossal hoard of 'private papers' (in whose acquisition by Yale University a very large sum

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of money, as well, was invested), and are understandably concerned that their investment should not depreciate. For those who believe – and who with any rudimentary sense of literary values can help believing? – that Johnson is a very great writer and Boswell a very minor one, it was disconcerting to learn recently that, unless funds were provided from private sources, the Yale edition of Johnson's works, less than half way to completion, would be terminated. We hear of no such threat to the Yale Edition of Boswell's papers, so that we can presumably count on being regaled indefinitely with the details of Boswell's claps and hangovers.

Having made several other charges against Boswell, Donald Greene concluded that the most serious charge 'is that his much-touted "hero-worship" of Johnson is a mask, disguising from himself and others an unconscious wish to cut Johnson down to size and establish, in the end, the superiority of Boswell, the aristocratic, polished man-of-the-world, to this ragged provincial with his uncouth manners and quaint, old-fashioned prejudices ... The psychology behind this is not hard to comprehend.'

To comprehend the argument, however, it is first necessary to know something of James Boswell.

He was born in Edinburgh in 1740, the son of a lawyer whose family had been landowners in Scotland since the fifteenth century. Some years after his son's birth, Alexander Boswell was appointed a Lord of Session, taking the non-hereditary title of Lord Auchinleck after his Ayrshire estate. He was a severe man, a strict Presbyterian with a strong sense of duty, an unremitting capacity for hard work and a dour manner occasionally moderated by flashes of ironic humour. His son respected him but never felt close to him and remained conscious throughout his life that he was both a disappointment and a trial to him. James felt more affection for his mother, a pretty, kind and pious woman descended from the Earls of Mar and Kincardine; but she seems not to have been the kind of parent to inspire lasting love and, as he grew up, James found her becoming increasingly remote from him.

Soon after his fifth birthday James was sent to a private

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academy in Edinburgh; but when his father inherited the family estate at Auchinleck he was taken away to be educated by private tutors. Neither at school nor at home was he happy. A shy, timid, uneasy boy, swarthy and rather fat, he was, as he put it himself, of a 'melancholy temperament', 'terrified by everything [he] did not understand'. At the age of thirteen he entered the University, but he still continued to live in his father's town house where Lord Auchinleck watched his progress carefully, hoping that he would follow the family tradition and become a lawyer.

James had other ideas. He was proud of his family's distinguished position in Scottish society and of his noble Scottish forebears; but as he grew older he longed to escape from the narrowness of Scottish life. His years at the University, interrupted by some kind of nervous breakdown, were changing his character; and, by the end of what was to prove his last term, he was no longer delicate, apprehensive and withdrawn, but gregarious, pleasure-loving and deeply sensual. He had made many friends; he had become a regular playgoer; he had fallen in love with an actress, and had had as many affairs with other women as could be conducted out of sight of his father's watchful eye. Lord Auchinleck, however, was well aware of his son's reprehensible activities; and, determined to remove him from the temptations of Edinburgh, he forbade him to return to the University there, sending him instead to Glasgow. But James had not been in Glasgow long when he horrified his father by informing him that he had decided to become a Roman Catholic. He was immediately summoned back to Edinburgh. He responded to the summons by riding away to London where, having been received into the Roman Catholic Church, he fell into the arms of a whore at the Blue Periwig with whom he celebrated those 'melting and transporting rights of love' which were for ever afterwards to enrapture and torment him.

Boswell had already had some verses published in the *Scots Magazine*; he had also contributed a number of play reviews to the *Edinburgh Chronicle*. But he did not see himself as a potential man of letters. Now, and for the rest of his life,

he delighted in casting himself in a variety of contrasting roles, comparing himself first to this acquaintance then to that, resolving to be more self-controlled in future like one man or more self-assured like another. In London in 1760, under the influence of a fellow-Scotsman, Lord Eglinton, he saw himself as an army officer, wearing the smart and fashionable uniform of a regiment of Guards, and he wrote home to his father asking for the money to buy a commission. Although he knew that his son's new ambition was inspired more by a desire to go on living in London than by any military ardour, Lord Auchinleck did not immediately refuse. He travelled to London himself, obtained an unfruitful interview for his son with the Duke of Argyll, then persuaded James to return with him to Scotland where he suggested buying him a commission in a regiment of the line. When James predictably declined the offer, his father insisted that he become a lawyer.

James dejectedly consented; and for the next two years he continued unwillingly with his studies, writing in his spare time, dedicating one anonymous poem to 'James Boswell, Esq.' and another (without permission) to the Duke of York, making love to any woman who would have him, contracting gonorrhoea, becoming the father of an illegitimate child by a servant girl, and all the time hankering for London and a more exciting life there in the Guards. At last, when he had passed his examination in Civil Law, his father gave way. So, in November 1762, he returned excitedly to London, 'all life and joy', so he said, singing songs about pretty girls and giving three cheers as the coach drove briskly in.

Boswell was then just twenty-two years old, a young man of little dignity and much vanity, with an overwhelming interest in self-analysis, a compelling need for self-revelation and remarkable resilience. There were those who found him rather absurd in his relentless pursuit of fame and favour; yet he was a very likeable person with a young boy's eager appetite for life and experience, conceited, to be sure, but not arrogant, sometimes silly but often amusing, occasionally unthinkingly cruel but rarely malicious. Although passionately

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interested in himself, he was also limitlessly curious about the character, behaviour and opinions of others, and was, in his own words, always 'studying human nature and making experiments'. He had already cultivated the friendship of numerous luminaries in the literary and academic circles of Edinburgh, all of whom were much older than himself but evidently found his company refreshing and congenial. Immediately upon his arrival in London he set about meeting 'all the Literati' and anyone else whom he might find useful, instructive or entertaining and whose acquaintance might, by improving the quality of his own conversation and widening the range of his knowledge and experience, make himself a more interesting man. Before many weeks had passed he had called upon the Duke of Queensberry and the Countess of Northumberland. He had met Robert Mylne, the architect; Charles Churchill, the poet; Oliver Goldsmith, 'a curious, odd, pedantic fellow with some genius'; and David Garrick, with whose kindness and flattering attention he was 'quite in raptures'. He had been taken to the Beefsteak Club where he drank wine and punch in plenty and sang a number of songs with a merry company that included John Wilkes. He had spent many equally carefree evenings with young men of his own age to whom he poured out his feelings about his present, his past, his future, his career, his needs, his character. He had gone to chop-houses, to coffee-houses, and to the theatre where once his 'Scotch blood [so] boiled with indignation' when two Highland officers were abused by the rabble in the pit that he jumped up onto a bench to swear violently at the demonstrators; and where, on another occasion, waiting for the performance to begin, he made a fool of himself by regaling the audience with his imitations of a cow. He had also gone to church where he surprised himself by 'laying plans for having a woman' while experiencing the 'most sincere feelings of religion'. He had wandered into St James's Park to pick up prostitutes and engage with them in 'low' sexual activities. He had fallen in love with an actress from whom he contracted gonorrhoea once more. Above all he had kept a journal.

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This journal, and its sequels, so vivid, so sparkling, so revealing, so honest, so exact in their record of scenes and characters, of events and conversations, were to become an essential part of their author's life. It was as though he had not fully realized the experiences of any of his days until he had set them down on paper. For he was a compulsive writer whose passion to record was as compelling as the waves of lust that overwhelmed him and drove him out into the streets, sometimes three times in the same night, in search of a woman's body. If he had nothing else to write about he would set down a memorandum for himself, reminding him to do something which he could not possibly have forgotten to do. Or he would make a list of the most enviable characteristics of the men he admired or of those most worthy of imitation. Frequently he would make introspective comments about his own character, sometimes derogatory, at others complimentary, rarely unjust. One day he decided, 'I am a singular man. I have the whim of an Englishman to make me think and act extravagantly, and yet I have the coolness and good sense of a Scotsman to make me sensible of it . . . I am a weaker man than can well be imagined. My brilliant qualities are like embroidery upon gauze.' A few months later, rather more pleased with the way his intellect was developing, he wrote that, whereas his mind had formerly been a lodging-house for all sorts of unsettling and unsettled ideas, now it was a house where, though strangers were welcome in the street rooms and on the upper floors, there was always 'a settled family in the back parlour and sleeping-closet behind it'.

Yet for the most – and by far the most valuable – part, Boswell's journals were a marvellously vivacious record of places visited, people met, conversations enjoyed, experiences savoured or regretted. They were alive with the most carefully observed detail as to clothes and accents, gestures and physical appearance, down to the length of a finger-nail or the cut of a wig. In one typical entry, Mr Shaw, a retired attorney, is described as 'precise, starch'd and proud. Wears

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a dark brown Coat, a buff vest, and black breeches; has a lank iron countenance; wears a weather-beaten scratch Wig; sits erect upon his chair, and sings *Tarry Woo* with an English accent.' Another attorney was 'a round man with a Bob-wig, and his coat buttoned, of manners plain and somewhat vulgar . . . Spoke too much and too minutely, took too much snuff and raised too often a kind of alehouse laugh.'

It is this practised expertise as a diarist which was to make Boswell's life of Johnson the fresh, unique and indispensable work of art which it is.

Although Boswell had succeeded in meeting so many of the great men he wanted to see soon after his arrival in London, several months passed before he was introduced to Samuel Johnson. Both in Scotland and in England, Johnson's name had cropped up many times in conversation, and Boswell had noted down what others had said of him. 'Mr Samuel Johnson has got a pension of £300 a year,' he had written after a talk with David Hume. 'Indeed his dictionary was a kind of national work so he has a kind of claim to the Patronage of the state. His stile is particular and pedantic. He is a man of enthusiasm and antiquated notions, a keen Jacobite yet hates the Scotch. Holds the Episcopal Hierarchy in supreme veneration and said he would stand before a battery of cannon to have the Convocation restored to its full powers. He holds Mr Hume in abhorrence and left a company one night upon his coming.'

The more he heard of him, the greater became Boswell's desire to meet 'the Giant'. And, undeterred by his reputation as a hater of Scots, he enlisted the help of every mutual acquaintance in the hope of gaining an introduction. It was not, however, until 16 May 1763, and then by chance, that the meeting at last took place. It was recorded, of course, in Boswell's journal where his first impressions of the subject of his future biography were set down :

Mr Johnson is a man of most dreadful appearance. He is a very big man, is troubled with sore eyes, the palsy, and the King's evil [scrofula]. He is very slovenly in his dress and speaks with a most

uncouth voice. Yet his great knowledge and strength of expression command vast respect and render him very excellent company. He has great humour and is a worthy man. But his dogmatic roughness of manners is disagreeable. I shall remark what I remember of his conversation.

Less than three months later, Boswell – having failed to get a commission in the Guards – left London to continue his legal studies in Holland. But during that time he saw Johnson regularly; and, true to the undertaking which he had made in his journal, he faithfully recorded the great man's conversation, either in the form of notes, or in detail, using a kind of personal shorthand which most writers develop, but always with a careful regard for the accuracy of the words stored up in a remarkably retentive memory.

Soon recovering from his initial dislike of the young man's brash importunity, Johnson warmed to him as most people did, and Boswell felt perfectly at ease in his company, much more so, as he told him, than he was with his father who was much the same age. Characteristically he asked Johnson what was the reason for this. 'Why, Sir,' replied Johnson with the utmost complacency, 'I am a man of the world, and I take, in some degree, the colour of the world as it moves along. Your father is a Judge in a remote part of the island, and all his notions are taken from the old world. Besides, Sir, there must always be a struggle between a father and son, while one aims at power and the other at independence.' It was on this evening, after supper at the Mitre, as though he had found in Boswell the son he had never had, just as Boswell had found in him the father he would have liked to have had, that Johnson suddenly stretched out his hand to him, and warmed by his share of two bottles and a pint of port, exclaimed, 'My dear Boswell, I do love you very much.'

The next month, in proof of this affection, he paid Boswell the compliment of accompanying him to Harwich when it was time for his young friend to sail to the Continent. After dinner at the inn, 'we went and looked at the church,' Boswell recorded,

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and having gone into it and walked up to the altar, Johnson, whose piety was constant and fervent, sent me to my knees, saying, 'Now that you are going to leave your native country, recommend yourself to the protection of your Creator and Redeemer.' . . . My revered friend walked down with me to the beach, where we embraced and parted with tenderness, and engaged to correspond by letters. I said, 'I hope, Sir, you will not forget me in my absence.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, it is more likely you should forget me, than that I should forget you.' As the vessel put out to sea, I kept my eyes upon him for a considerable time, while he remained rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner: and at last I perceived him walk back into the town and he disappeared.

It seems that even then the idea of a biography had already crossed Boswell's mind. He had certainly decided that his journal would 'afford materials for a very curious narrative.' But there were never to be another three months in his life when he was to have an opportunity of seeing so much of Johnson, of observing the quickness and fertility of his mind, his sharp insights, his marvellously inventive humour.

Boswell spent almost a year in Holland, then embarked on a Grand Tour of Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France. He failed in his ambition to be received by King Frederick the Great, but he contrived for himself meetings with both Rousseau and Voltaire and had himself presented to the Pope as Baron Boswell. From Italy he sailed to Corsica where, with the help of a letter of introduction from Rousseau, he managed to gain an interview with Pasquale Paoli, the Corsicans' leader in their struggle for independence, and where he obtained materials for his first successful book, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to That Island; and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli*. It was not until February 1766 that he returned to London, bringing with him Rousseau's mistress who was going to join her lover at the lodgings of David Hume and who had allowed or enticed Boswell into bed with her when they were waiting at a Calais inn for the departure of the Channel packet. But Boswell was unable to stay in London long; nor did he manage to see as much of

Johnson as he would have liked, occupied as he was in campaigning for the Corsicans and in presenting himself as their leading champion. Within a month he was back in Scotland where he set up as his mistress, in lodgings in Edinburgh, an 'ill-bred, romping' girl, 'admirably formed for amorous dalliance'; and where he settled down earnestly to prepare himself for his final examinations in Scots law. He passed these examinations in July and so, at the age of twenty-five, he was admitted as an advocate and faced with predictably conflicting emotions a future in the Edinburgh courts of law. He married his cousin, Margaret Montgomerie, a kind, understanding, sensible woman who was to listen patiently to his confessions of faithlessness; and, though harbouring other ambitions both literary and political, it was as a lawyer with his roots and family in Scotland that he was to spend almost all the rest of his working life.

London, and Johnson, remained alluring magnets for him; but his journeys south were infrequent. Indeed, it has been calculated that – apart from the time they spent together in the Hebrides, the subject of a book first published by Boswell in 1786 – the two men were in each other's company on only about 300 days between the time of their first meeting and Johnson's death. During these days Boswell made the most of his opportunities; using his great gifts as an interviewer to draw Johnson out by confiding to him his own fears and ambitions; patiently waiting – like a zoologist – for his quarry to appear in his most revealing colours; repeatedly asking questions until Johnson cried out, 'Sir, I will not be baited with "what" and "why"'. "Why is a cow's tail long?" "Why is a fox's tail bushy?"'; contriving meetings, as that sublime encounter between Wilkes and Johnson; leading the conversation into fruitful fields, 'not leading, as in an orchestra, by playing the first fiddle', as Boswell explained; 'but leading as one does in examining a witness – starting topics, and making him pursue them'.

Yet Boswell's visits to London, infrequent as they were, could not be wholly devoted to refreshing his mind 'in the variety and spirit of the metropolis' and in the 'conversation

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of [his] revered friend Mr Samuel Johnson'. In the spring of 1772, for example, he gave as additional reasons, 'to try if I could get something for myself, or be of service to any of my friends by means of the Duke of Queensberry, Lord Mountstuart, or Douglas; to be employed in Scotch appeals in the House of Lords, and also to see how the land might lie for me at the English bar'. There were, in addition, those 'red-haired hussies' or 'curious young little pretties' with whom he 'wallowed in vice' when in one of those 'kinds of brutal fever' which could be relieved only by 'dalliance'.

Much as he enjoyed his visits to London, he could never afford to stay long; and soon had to return to Scotland where he spent his days working in his never very successful legal business, speaking in court 'with much gravity and dull attention', often feeling 'sadly low spirited, indolent, listless and gloomy', gambling a good deal, losing his temper and smashing the dining-room chairs, alternating between moods of acute self-criticism and complacent self-satisfaction, musing in church about 'the future state', making resolutions to lead a better life and searching the Bible for evidence that concubinage was not a sin, that God did not 'forbid girls', sometimes getting very drunk and picking up women in the streets and boldly lying with them in a field behind the Register Office or in a shed in St Andrew's Square before returning, ashamed and for the moment contrite, to his wife and children.

From time to time he considered conscientiously settling down to his biography of Johnson which he appears first to have mentioned as a definite possibility in 1775 in a letter to his friend, the high-minded clergyman, William Temple. But he did not make much headway with the project: he was more concerned for the time being in securing some salaried political office. Repeatedly disappointed, he persistently renewed his search, enlisting the help of anyone whom he thought might be able to help him from Paoli and Edmund Burke to Lord Bute and Henry Dundas. When his father died and, at the age of forty-two, he became Laird of Auchinleck, he believed that his aspirations might now be

taken more seriously and that people would treat him more respectfully. But his renewed applications were rebuffed; and he decided that if he were to succeed he would have to give up his practice at the Scottish bar and settle in London. So, bringing down his ill and most unwilling wife together with their children, he moved to London, his mind for once 'firm and serene', entertaining hopes of becoming a judge in the Court of King's Bench. He was far less successful, though, in London even than he had been in Edinburgh; in his first eight months he obtained no more than a single brief. Almost desperate by this time for political office, he sought the help of the unsavoury 'Northern Tyrant', the Earl of Lonsdale, whose influence he hoped might enable him to become Member of Parliament for Carlisle. Lonsdale did obtain for him the Recordership of Carlisle (which he soon resigned in disgust at the 'low, dirty politicks' involved in the appointment); but when a suggestion was made that Boswell might be promoted to a parliamentary seat, his patron dismissed the idea with the comment that the fellow would only 'get drunk and make a foolish speech'.

Gradually, unwillingly, therefore, Boswell turned to his *Life of Johnson* as 'perhaps now the only concern of any consequence' that he would 'ever have in this world.' On Johnson's death in December 1784 he was asked to provide a book of his sayings which could be placed with the printers within a matter of weeks. But, conscious of the fact that this would do justice neither to himself nor to the memory of Johnson, he replied that the material he had already assembled justified a work of more ambitious scope. Although hindered by 'habits of indolence and dejection of spirit', and afraid that he could no longer write as well as he had done at the time of his book on Corsica, he got down to work conscientiously, not only sorting through his own records with the utmost care but going to the greatest trouble to communicate with anyone else who had known his friend and could contribute authentic information about him, running 'half over London', as he put it himself, 'to fix a date correctly'. He had in mind, as a model, Mason's *Life of Gray*,

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though he planned to improve upon that model by conveying the full flavour of Johnson's talk by giving it not in *oratio obliqua* but in full *oratio recta*.

The process of composition was painfully slow. The months passed and work on the book, interrupted by bouts of drunkenness and sexual escapades, proceeded so laboriously that doubt was expressed as to whether it ever would be finished. Boswell himself was sometimes almost in despair. 'You cannot imagine what labour, what perplexity, what vexation I have endured in arranging a prodigious multiplicity of materials,' he wrote to Temple, 'in supplying omissions, in searching for papers buried in different masses – and all besides the exertion of composing and polishing.'

Temple encouraged him; so did Edmund Malone, the critic and editor, who lectured him upon his intemperance and delay; so, too, no doubt did the memory of Johnson who had declared that, while 'we would all be idle if we could,' 'a man may write at any time if he will set himself doggedly to do it,' and that 'what is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.'

During the course of his endeavours, Boswell's wife died; and he was utterly cast down by the thought that he had not shown her the kindness he ought to have done, and that when she had been ill he had been out drinking with his friends and had come home late to disturb her troubled sleep. He moved house from Queen Anne Street West to Great Portland Street, and this, too, unsettled him and took time from his work. Then other biographies appeared. William Shaw's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Late Dr Samuel Johnson* was published in 1785; Hester Lynch Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson* in 1786; Sir John Hawkins's *Life of Samuel Johnson* in 1787. Boswell was warned that these books had sated the public's interest in Johnson which was, in any case, already waning. He was also told that, even if his work were much better than its predecessors, no one would want to read a biography so long as his threatened to be or to pay the two guineas the two necessarily fat volumes would cost.

To assure his potential readers that, on the contrary, his own book would be well worth its price, as well as worth waiting for, he inserted an advertisement in the *Gentleman's Magazine* soon after the publication of Sir John Hawkins's biography :

The Publick are respectfully informed that Mr Boswell's LIFE of Dr Johnson is in great Forwardness. The Reason its having been delayed is, that some other Publications on that Subject were promised, from which he expected to obtain much Information, in Addition to the large Store of Materials which he had already accumulated. These Works have now made their Appearance; and, though disappointed in that Expectation, he does not regret the Deliberation with which he has proceeded, as very few Circumstances relative to the History of Dr. Johnson's private Life, Writings, or Conversation, have been told with that authentic Precision which alone can render Biography valuable.

The advertisement went on to hint that one of the publications for which he had been waiting was characterized by 'carelessness and pique', the other 'ponderous' work by 'solemn inaccuracy and dark uncharitable conjecture'. Boswell's own pique was understandable : in Mrs Piozzi's work he himself was accused of inaccuracy in a statement in his *Tour of the Hebrides*; in Sir John Hawkins's book he was virtually ignored, being referred to but once as a 'native of Scotland' who had long solicited Johnson 'to accompany him in a journey to the Hebrides'.

Boswell's jealousy of Mrs Piozzi had long been known. For, ever since 1765 Johnson had been, as she claimed herself, her constant 'Visitor, Companion and Friend'. At the time of her first meeting with Johnson she was Mrs Henry Thrale, wife of a prosperous brewer, an attractive, sprightly, rather plump, very short young woman who delighted in entertaining guests to dinner at her pleasant country house at Streatham. Here Johnson became not just a regular dinner guest, but for long periods a resident for whom the kindness and comforts, the reassuring and continuing companionship of the Thrale family became the mainstay of his life. The friendship between him and Mrs Thrale developed, indeed,

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into an intimacy whose mysterious depths are hinted at in an extraordinary correspondence of 1773 in which padlocks, fetters and rods are mentioned, in which Mrs Thrale refers to herself as his governess and Johnson calls himself her slave. It was rumoured, after Henry Thrale's death, that they might marry, a most improbable event that Boswell with unpardonably bad taste ridiculed in an ode upon 'the supposed approaching nuptials'. When Mrs Thrale did marry Gabriel Piozzi, Johnson's reaction was painfully ferocious; he rejected the offer of reconciliation; and, for the rest of his life, when he spoke of her at all, he did so with a kind of contemptuous hatred. For years, though, no one had known Johnson so well as she had done in sickness and in health, in high spirits and in those moods when, beset by 'sinful and corrupt imaginations', by 'inordinate desires' and 'wicked thoughts', he feared he was going mad. It was natural that Boswell should feel envious of such a woman who could demonstrate in her book – which was, despite her rival's opinion, both entertaining and instructive – a closer intimacy with their subject than he himself could justifiably claim.

Hawkins, too, had known Johnson well and over a much longer period than Boswell had done. While Boswell was still in the schoolroom, Hawkins had helped Johnson to establish a little club whose meetings were held weekly at a well-known beefsteak house, the King's Head, Ivy Lane; and it is likely that the two men had been friends long before this. Johnson described Hawkins as 'unclubbable', but there is no doubt that he was fond of him all the same. Frances Reynolds remembered how often Johnson spoke of him 'in terms expressive of great esteem and much cordiality of friendship'. He was a gifted man, an attorney who rose to become Chairman of the Quarter Sessions for the County of Middlesex, the learned and versatile author of, amongst other works, a five-volume *History of the Science and Practice of Music*. As Johnson's friend and one of his executors as well as a practised writer he, like Boswell, was naturally approached by booksellers for a book about Johnson as soon as the great man died.

The first reviews of Hawkins's biography were favourable; long extracts were printed in various popular magazines; and the first edition was soon sold out. Before a second edition was ready, however, weightier journals had pointed out the biography's failings, its inaccuracies, its malevolent revelations of Johnson's faults, above all its digressions into such irrelevancies as an account of a sixteenth-century breakfast (transcribed in Latin) and a list of the several ways in which a criminal might avoid being brought to justice. 'We often lose Dr Johnson,' the *Critical Review* complained, ungrammatically expressing a common opinion. 'The [author] sinks under the weight of his subject, and is glad to escape to scenes more congenial to his disposition, and more suitable to his talents, the garrulity of a literary old man.' Another critic sympathized with a poor reader who had sunk into 'a lethargy, owing to the perusal of three chapters in Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*'.

No critic was more severe than Boswell who devoted a lengthy paragraph in the opening chapter of his own book to warn his readers that Hawkins's *Life* was written by a man whose 'rigid formality of manners' made it evident that he and his subject 'never could have lived together with companionable ease and familiarity.' Only 'a very small part' of the work related to Johnson and there was 'such an inaccuracy in the statement of facts, as in so solemn an author [was] hardly excusable, and certainly [made] his narrative very unsatisfactory'. 'But what is still worse,' Boswell continued, 'there is throughout the whole of it a dark uncharitable cast, by which the most unfavourable construction is put upon almost every circumstance in the character and conduct of my illustrious friend.'

It was true that parts of Hawkins's *Life* were extremely ponderous and that the book did contain certain inaccuracies. It was also true that Hawkins did find fault with Johnson's sloppy table manners and slovenly dress, his laziness and the 'indiscriminate bounty' which he lavished upon the undeserving poor. But there is never a suggestion that these faults detracted from Johnson's essential greatness. The por-

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trait of the man that emerges is fundamentally the same as that drawn by Boswell; and in some respects Hawkins comes closer to the truth.

The impression of Johnson's plain wife and the uneven course of their marriage which we get from Hawkins is certainly more convincing than the romanticized version of Boswell.

Their marriage was not one of those which inconsiderate young people call love matches [Hawkins wrote] . . . She was more than old enough to be his mother . . . Her inattention to some, at least, of the duties of a wife, was evident in the person of her husband whose negligence of dress seemed never to have received the least correction from her, and who, in the sordidness of his apparel, and the complexion of his linen, even shamed her . . . I have often been inclined to think, that if this fondness of Johnson for his wife was not dissembled, it was a lesson that he had learned by rote, and that, when he practised it, he knew not where to stop till he became ridiculous . . . As, during her lifetime, he invited but few of his friends to his house, I never saw her, but I have been told by Mr Garrick, Dr Hawkesworth and others, that there was somewhat crazy in the behaviour of them both; profound respect for his part, and the airs of an antiquated beauty on hers . . . [After her death] he laboured to raise his opinion of her to the highest, by inserting in many of her books of devotion that I have seen, such endearing memorials as these: 'This was dear Tetty's book' - 'This was a prayer which dear Tetty was accustomed to say', not to mention his frequent recollection of her in his meditations, and the singularity of his prayers respecting her.

To achieve his own picture of the marriage Boswell suppressed some evidence in his possession which would have tended to modify it. And this suppression of material, both relating to Johnson's relations with women and to other matters, has led Boswell into trouble with his later critics. Knowing Johnson to be so physically attracted to women, many of his contemporaries supposed that on occasions he had given way to his desires. Peter Garrick averred that 'a lady, a very fine woman' had once told him that 'Mr Johnson was a very seducing man among the women when he chose it', and

Garrick added that it was supposed that this woman had herself been seduced by him. John Hawkins, who looked into a diary that Johnson apparently burned shortly before his death, confessed in a 'grave and earnest' conversation that he wished that he 'had not read so much. [Johnson] had strong amorous passions.' When it was objected, 'But he did not indulge them?', Hawkins replied, 'I have said enough.' Later Hawkins expressed the opinion that Johnson was 'a man too strict in his morals to give any reasonable cause of jealousy to a wife'. But there was a strong belief that before marriage, when he had roamed the town with the rakish Richard Savage, and soon after his wife's death, when his dread of solitude and his physical needs prompted him to consider a second wife, Johnson may well have succumbed to his passions.

Boswell is most reticent about all this. He seems to have looked into the diary that Johnson destroyed, and to have agreed with Hawkins to 'use its contents as a source most guardedly'. Against Peter Garrick's story of Johnson having seduced the 'very fine woman' he noted in his journal 'not very probable'; but he did not discount the possibility that he had indulged his 'strong amorous passions' as a young man and attributed Johnson's remorse in his dying days to this indulgence. Yet there is no discussion of Johnson's 'amorous passions' in his later years; no mention of his search for a second wife or of his flirtation with Mrs Desmoulins whom Johnson stroked and fondled as she sat on his bed before pushing her away from him with a sudden cry of lament and a sharp order to leave him.

Similarly Boswell decided not to use anecdotes which displayed Johnson at his most self-indulgent in food and drink. Dr John Taylor recorded an occasion when Johnson ate so much of 'a glorious haunch of venison' that it was feared 'he would have died of downright eating, and had not a surgeon been got to administer to him without delay a glister he must have died.' And Edmund Hector recalled an evening in Birmingham which Boswell noted down in his journal in these words :

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Once when he lived at Birmingham there came a Relation of his of the name of Ford from Stourbridge to whom he had been under obligations. He was it seems a hard drinker and he engaged Johnson and Hector to spend the evening with him at the Swan Inn. Johnson said to Hector, 'This fellow will make us both drunk. Let us take him by turns, and get rid of him.' It was settled that Hector should go first. He and Ford drank three bottles of Port before Johnson came. When Johnson arrived, Hector found he had been drinking at Mr Porter's instead of saving himself. Hector went to bed at the Swan leaving Johnson to drink on with Ford. Next morning he perceived that Johnson who had been his bed-fellow had been Very drunk and he dammed him.

Neither of these stories was to find a place in the *Life*.

While he chose to ignore various episodes in Johnson's life and certain disconcerting aspects of his character, Boswell also blurred the directness and softened the bluntness of some of his remarks. Boswell was told, for instance, by David Hume that Johnson had once spent an evening behind the scenes in the Green Room of a theatre. 'He said he had been well entertained. Mr Garrick therefore hoped to see him often. "No, David," said he, "I will never come back. For the white bobbies and the silk stockings of your Actresses excite my genitals."' This observation of Johnson's, recorded in Boswell's journal of 4 November 1762, becomes in the *Life*, 'I'll come no more behind your scenes, David; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities.' Similarly, the 1769 journal contains this entry: 'Last time I was with Dr Campbell, he told me that he was beginning to agree with Mr Johnson about the colonists. "Sir," said Johnson, "They are a parcel of convicts, and if they get anything short of hanging they ought to be content."' In the *Life* 'parcel' becomes 'race'.

There are certain other familiar charges against Boswell which are irrefutable. It is undeniable that he saw much less of Johnson than he would have liked his readers to suppose; that he did not meet him for the first time until Johnson was fifty-three; that he gave undue prominence to the last two decades of Johnson's life which occupy five-sixths of his

book; and that, although he made great efforts to discover the full history of the earlier years, he found out far less than scholars have since unearthed. It is also undeniable that the construction of the book is extremely ill-designed. Excuses may be made for this. As George Saintsbury observed long ago, it is more a book for dipping into than for reading from beginning to end; and, as more recent critics have remarked, it lacks narrative tension because Boswell, well aware that he did not have a gripping story to tell, concentrated on building up an unforgettable portrait of Johnson's character by developing 'a Flemish picture' composed of numerous interrelated details. Even so Boswell's biography is unnecessarily, even slavishly, chronological, including a great number of letters which might profitably have been omitted or paraphrased, and containing such clumsy comments as, 'during this year (1770) there was a total cessation of all correspondence between Dr Johnson and me . . . and as I was not in London, I had no opportunity of enjoying his company and recording his conversation. To supply this blank, I shall present my readers with some Collectanea.'

Other charges against Boswell are not so easily upheld. While the contentious objections of 'the New Criticism' to literary biography as an irrelevant diversion from a serious study of the subject's writings may be disregarded, it may perhaps be conceded that in Boswell's *Life* we sometimes lose sight of the fact that Johnson was not only a brilliantly gifted conversationalist and delightfully eccentric character but also a deeply conscientious and dedicated professional writer. On the other hand it is surely unjust to suggest, as John Wain does in his admirable biography, that 'what we lose in [Boswell's] portrait is the deeply humanitarian Johnson, the man who from first to last rooted his life among the poor and outcast.' It also seems perverse to complain, as others have done, that the domestic, informal Johnson as described by Mrs Thrale and the playful, teasingly flirtatious Johnson as presented to us by Fanny Burney, is not to be recognized in Boswell's more authoritarian figure. Boswell himself claimed that Johnson could be seen 'more completely'

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in his biography than any man who had 'ever yet lived'. And if this claim may be too large to accept, Boswell must be given due credit for having produced a portrait of extraordinary vividness and fullness and a biography which has never been superseded.

Although the reception of the book was – as the author congratulated himself in his advertisement to the second edition – 'very favourable', Boswell was not generally thought to have produced a masterpiece. For many years, indeed, he was derided as a foolish, interfering, absurdly vain busybody who was determined to push himself forward to catch the reader's attention and who brought forth a great work in spite of himself, as though by accident. 'Any fool,' wrote Thomas Gray when the *Tour in Corsica* appeared, 'may write a valuable book by chance.' And later critics propounded the view that, if the *Life* had merit, that too was achieved by chance. It was not until the eleventh edition of the book was brought out by John Wilson Croker in 1831 that Macaulay pronounced it the best biography ever written, and Thomas Carlyle, in an enormously long review, rated it in worth as a book 'beyond any other product of the eighteenth century'. 'It was as if the curtains of the past were drawn aside,' Carlyle continued, 'and we looked into a country ... which had seemed forever hidden from our eyes ... Wondrously given back to us, there once more it lay. There it still lies.'

While wary of such hyperbole, modern scholarship has given Boswell his due; and though his methods, his evasions, his intrusions and shortcomings are all open to such attacks as that launched by Donald Greene, he is not likely to be deprived of it.

This edition, from which much material, including most letters and Boswell's unwelcome and unwarranted intrusions, has been omitted, is based on the 1799 edition, the last in which the author had a hand. That version, edited by George Birkbeck Hill, was reprinted by the Clarendon Press in 1904; and was subsequently revised and enlarged by L. F. Powell.

BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

A new edition was revised by R. W. Chapman in 1953; and a third edition by J. D. Fleeman in 1970. The division into chapters has been carried out for the convenience of readers of this shortened version in which the editor's interpolations and identifications of unnamed characters are given between square brackets.

For good biographies of Boswell the reader is referred to David Daiches's short, illustrated *James Boswell and his World* (Thames and Hudson, 1976), Frederick A. Pottle's *James Boswell: the Earlier Years, 1740-1769* (Heinemann, 1966) and D. B. Wyndham Lewis's *The Hooded Hawk* (1946). The Yale Edition of the Private Papers of James Boswell includes *The Correspondence and other Papers of James Boswell Relating to the Making of the Life of Johnson* (ed. Marshall Waingrow, Heinemann, 1969). Geoffrey Scott's study of the making of the *Life* out of the journal and its sources is the sixth volume of *The Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle*. There are some interesting essays in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Boswell's Life of Johnson* (ed. J. L. Clifford, 1970).

CHRISTOPHER HIBBERT

Facsimile of the title page of the third edition, published in 1799.

THE
L I F E
OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.

COMPREHENDING
AN ACCOUNT OF HIS STUDIES
AND NUMEROUS WORKS,
IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER;
A SERIES OF HIS EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE
AND CONVERSATIONS WITH MANY EMINENT PERSONS;
AND
VARIOUS ORIGINAL PIECES OF HIS COMPOSITION,
NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED:
THE WHOLE EXHIBITING A VIEW OF LITERATURE AND
LITERARY MEN IN GREAT-BRITAIN, FOR NEAR
HALF A CENTURY, DURING WHICH HE
FLOURISHED.

By JAMES BOSWELL, Esq.

— *Quid sit ut omnis*
Virtus pateat veluti descripta tabula
VITA SENIS.—

HORAT.

THE THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND AUGMENTED,
IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE FIRST

LONDON:

PRINTED BY H. BALDWIN AND SON,
FOR CHARLES DILLY, IN THE POULTRY

MDCCXCIX.

PART I
1709-48

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, on the 18th of September, 1709; and his initiation into the Christian Church was not delayed; for his baptism is recorded, in the register of St Mary's parish in that city, to have been performed on the day of his birth.¹ His father is there stiled *Gentleman*, a circumstance of which an ignorant panegyrist has praised him for not being proud; when the truth is, that the appellation of *Gentleman*, though now lost in the indiscriminate assumption of *Esquire*, was commonly taken by those who could not boast of gentility. His father was Michael Johnson, a native of Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, who settled in Lichfield as a bookseller and stationer. His mother was Sarah Ford, descended of an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire. They were well advanced in years when they married, and never had more than two children, both sons; Samuel, their first born, who lived to be the illustrious character whose various excellence I am to endeavour to record, and Nathanael, who died in his twenty-fifth year.

Mr Michael Johnson was a man of a large and robust body, and of a strong and active mind; yet, as in the most solid rocks veins of unsound substance are often discovered, there was in him a mixture of that disease, the nature of which eludes the most minute enquiry, though the effects are well known to be a weariness of life, an unconcern about those things which agitate the greater part of mankind, and a general sensation of gloomy wretchedness. From him then his son inherited, with some other qualities, 'a vile melancholy,' which in his too strong expression of any disturbance of the mind, 'made him mad all his life, at least not sober.' Michael was, however, forced by the narrowness of his cir-

cumstances to be very diligent in business, not only in his shop, but by occasionally resorting to several towns in the neighbourhood, some of which were at a considerable distance from Lichfield. At that time booksellers' shops in the provincial towns of England were very rare, so that there was not one even in Birmingham, in which town old Mr Johnson used to open a shop every market-day. He was a pretty good Latin scholar, and a citizen so creditable as to be made one of the magistrates of Lichfield; and, being a man of good sense, and skill in his trade, he acquired a reasonable share of wealth, of which however he afterwards lost the greatest part, by engaging unsuccessfully in a manufacture of parchment. He was a zealous high-churchman and royalist, and retained his attachment to the unfortunate house of Stuart, though he reconciled himself, by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the prevailing power.

There is a circumstance in his life somewhat romantick, but so well authenticated, that I shall not omit it. A young woman of Leek, in Staffordshire, while he served his apprenticeship there, conceived a violent passion for him; and though it met with no favourable return, followed him to Lichfield, where she took lodgings opposite to the house in which he lived, and indulged her hopeless flame. When he was informed that it so preyed upon her mind that her life was in danger, he with a generous humanity went to her and offered to marry her, but it was then too late: her vital power was exhausted; and she actually exhibited one of the very rare instances of dying for love. She was buried in the cathedral of Lichfield; and he, with tender regard, placed a stone over her grave with this inscription:

Here lies the body of
Mrs ELIZABETH BLANEY, a stranger.
She departed this life
20 of September, 1694.

Johnson's mother was a woman of distinguished understanding. I asked his old school-fellow, Mr [Edmund] Hec-

tor, surgeon, of Birmingham, if she was not vain of her son. He said, 'she had too much good sense to be vain, but she knew her son's value.' Her piety was not inferiour to her understanding; and to her must be ascribed those early impressions of religion upon the mind of her son, from which the world afterwards derived so much benefit. He told me, that he remembered distinctly having had the first notice of Heaven, 'a place to which good people went,' and hell, 'a place to which bad people went,' communicated to him by her, when a little child in bed with her; and that it might be the better fixed in his memory, she sent him to repeat it to Thomas Jackson, their man-servant; he not being in the way, this was not done; but there was no occasion for any artificial aid for its preservation.

In following so very eminent a man from his cradle to his grave, every minute particular, which can throw light on the progress of his mind, is interesting. That he was remarkable, even in his earliest years, may easily be supposed; for to use his own words in his *Life of Sydenham*,²

'That the strength of his understanding, the accuracy of his discernment, and ardour of his curiosity, might have been remarked from his infancy, by a diligent observer, there is no reason to doubt. For, there is no instance of any man, whose history has been minutely related, that did not in every part of life discover the same proportion of intellectual vigour.'

In all such investigations it is certainly unwise to pay too much attention to incidents which the credulous relate with eager satisfaction, and the more scrupulous or witty enquirer considers only as topicks of ridicule: Yet there is a traditional story of the infant Hercules of toryism, so curiously characteristic, that I shall not withhold it. It was communicated to me in a letter from Miss Mary Adye, of Lichfield.

'When Dr [Henry] Sacheverel was at Lichfield, Johnson was not quite three years old. My grandfather [Richard] Hammond observed him at the cathedral perched upon his father's shoulders, listening and gaping at the much celebrated preacher. Mr Hammond asked Mr Johnson how he could possibly think of bringing such an infant to church,

and in the midst of so great a croud. He answered, because it was impossible to keep him at home; for, young as he was, he believed he had caught the publick spirit and zeal for Sacheverel, and would have staid for ever in the church, satisfied with beholding him.'

Nor can I omit a little instance of that jealous independence of spirit, and impetuosity of temper, which never forsook him. The fact was acknowledged to me by himself, upon the authority of his mother. One day, when the servant who used to be sent to school to conduct him home, had not come in time, he set out by himself, though he was then so near-sighted, that he was obliged to stoop down on his hands and knees to take a view of the kennel before he ventured to step over it. His school-mistress, afraid that he might miss his way, or fall into the kennel, or be run over by a cart, followed him at some distance. He happened to turn about and perceive her. Feeling her careful attention as an insult to his manliness, he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her, as well as his strength would permit.

Of the power of his memory, for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible, the following early instance was told me in his presence at Lichfield, in 1776, by his step-daughter, Mrs Lucy Porter, as related to her by his mother. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs Johnson one morning put the common prayer-book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, 'Sam, you must get this by heart.' She went up stairs, leaving him to study it : But by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. 'What's the matter?' said she. 'I can say it,' he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it over more than twice.

Young Johnson had the misfortune to be much afflicted with the scrophula, or king's evil, which disfigured a countenance naturally well formed, and hurt his visual nerves so much, that he did not see at all with one of his eyes, though its appearance was little different from that of the other. There is amongst his prayers, one inscribed *'When my EYE*

was restored to its use,' which ascertains a defect that many of his friends knew he had, though I never perceived it. I supposed him to be only near-sighted; and indeed I must observe, that in no other respect could I discern any defect in his vision; on the contrary, the force of his attention and perceptive quickness made him see and distinguish all manner of objects, whether of nature or of art, with a nicety that is rarely to be found. When he and I were travelling in the Highlands of Scotland, and I pointed out to him a mountain which I observed resembled a cone, he corrected my inaccuracy, by shewing me, that it was indeed pointed at the top, but that one side of it was larger than the other. And the ladies with whom he was acquainted agreed, that no man was more nicely and minutely critical in the elegance of female dress. It has been said, that he contracted this grievous malady from his nurse. His mother yielding to the superstitious notion, which, it is wonderful to think, prevailed so long in this country, as to the virtue of the regal touch; a notion, which our kings encouraged, and to which a man of such inquiry and such judgement as [Thomas] Carte could give credit; carried him to London, where he was actually touched by Queen Anne. Johnson used to talk of this very frankly; and Mrs Piozzi has preserved his very picturesque description of the scene, as it remained upon his fancy. Being asked if he could remember Queen Anne, 'He had (he said) a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds, and a long black hood.' This touch, however, was without any effect. I ventured to say to him, in allusion to the political principles in which he was educated, and of which he ever retained some odour, that 'his mother had not carried him far enough; she should have taken him to ROME.'

He was first taught to read English by Dame Oliver, a widow, who kept a school for young children in Lichfield. He told me she could read the black letter, and asked him to borrow for her, from his father, a bible in that character. When he was going to Oxford, she came to take leave of him, brought him, in the simplicity of her kindness, a present of

gingerbread, and said, he was the best scholar she had ever had. He delighted in mentioning this early compliment: adding, with a smile, that 'this was as high a proof of his merit as he could conceive.' His next instructor in English was a master, whom, when he spoke of him to me, he familiarly called Tom Brown, who, said he, 'published a spelling-book, and dedicated it to the UNIVERSE; but, I fear, no copy of it can now be had.'

He began to learn Latin with Mr [Humphrey] Hawkins, usher, or under-master of Lichfield school, 'a man (said he) very skilful in his little way.' With him he continued two years, and then rose to be under the care of Mr [the Rev. John] Hunter, the head-master, who, according to his account, 'was very severe, and wrong-headedly severe. He used (said he) to beat us unmercifully; and he did not distinguish between ignorance and negligence; for he would beat a boy equally for not knowing a thing, as for neglecting to know it. He would ask a boy a question; and if he did not answer it, he would beat him, without considering whether he had an opportunity of knowing how to answer it. For instance, he would call up a boy and ask him Latin for a candlestick, which the boy could not expect to be asked. Now, Sir, if a boy could answer every question, there would be no need of a master to teach him.'

It is, however, but justice to the memory of Mr Hunter to mention, that though he might err in being too severe, the school of Lichfield was very respectable in his time.

Indeed Johnson was very sensible how much he owed to Mr Hunter. Mr [Bennet] Langton one day asked him how he had acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin, in which, I believe, he was exceeded by no man of his time; he said, 'My master whipt me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing.' He told Mr Langton, that while Hunter was flogging his boys unmercifully, he used to say, 'And this I do to save you from the gallows.' Johnson, upon all occasions, expressed his approbation of enforcing instruction by means of the rod. 'I would rather (said he) have the rod to be the general terrour to all, to make them learn, than tell a

child, if you do thus, or thus, you will be more esteemed than your brothers or sisters. The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped, and gets his task, and there's an end on't; whereas, by exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundation of lasting mischief; you make brothers and sisters hate each other.'

From his earliest years Johnson's superiority was perceived and acknowledged. He was from the beginning "Ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν" a king of men. His school-fellow, Mr Hector, has obligingly furnished me with many particulars of his boyish days: and assured me that he never knew him corrected at school, but for talking and diverting other boys from their business. He seemed to learn by intuition; for though indolence and procrastination were inherent in his constitution, whenever he made an exertion he did more than any one else. His favourites used to receive very liberal assistance from him; and such was the submission and deference with which he was treated, such the desire to obtain his regard, that three of the boys, of whom Mr Hector was sometimes one, used to come in the morning as his humble attendants, and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped, while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him; and thus he was borne triumphant. Talking to me once himself of his being much distinguished at school, he told me, 'they never thought to raise me by comparing me to any one; they never said, Johnson is as good a scholar as such a one; but such a one is as good a scholar as Johnson; and this was said but of one, but of Lowe; and I do not think he was as good a scholar.'

He discovered a great ambition to excel, which roused him to counteract his indolence. He was uncommonly inquisitive; and his memory was so tenacious, that he never forgot any thing that he either heard or read. Mr Hector remembers having recited to him eighteen verses, which, after a little pause, he repeated *verbatim*, varying only one epithet, by which he improved the line.

He never joined with the other boys in their ordinary diversions: his only amusement was in winter, when he took

a pleasure in being drawn upon the ice by a boy barefooted, who pulled him along by a garter fixed round him; no very easy operation, as his size was remarkably large. His defective sight, indeed, prevented him from enjoying the common sports; and he once pleasantly remarked to me, 'how wonderfully well he had contrived to be idle without them.'

*

1725: ÆTAT. 16.] – After having resided for some time at the house of his uncle, Cornelius Ford, Johnson was, at the age of fifteen, removed to the school of Stourbridge, in Worcestershire, of which Mr [the Rev. John] Wentworth was then master. This step was taken by the advice of his cousin, the Reverend Mr [Cornelius] Ford, a man in whom both talents and good dispositions were disgraced by licentiousness, but who was a very able judge of what was right.³ At this school he did not receive so much benefit as was expected. It has been said, that he acted in the capacity of an assistant to Mr Wentworth, in teaching the younger boys. 'Mr Wentworth (he told me) was a very able man, but an idle man, and to me very severe; but I cannot blame him much. I was then a big boy; he saw I did not reverence him; and that he should get no honour by me. I had brought enough with me, to carry me through; and all I should get at his school would be ascribed to my own labour, or to my former master. Yet he taught me a great deal.'

He remained at Stourbridge little more than a year, and then returned home, where he may be said to have loitered, for two years, in a state very unworthy his uncommon abilities.

The two years which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in what he thought idleness, and was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study, as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance of his

casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book. What he read during these two years he told me, was not works of mere amusement, 'not voyages and travels, but all literature, Sir, all ancient writers, all manly : though but little Greek, only some of Anacreon and Hesiod; but in this irregular manner (added he) I had looked into a great many books, which were not commonly known at the Universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr [William] Adams, now master of Pembroke College, told me I was the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there.'

That a man in Mr Michael Johnson's circumstances should think of sending his son to the expensive University of Oxford, at his own charge, seems very improbable. The subject was too delicate to question Johnson upon. But I have been assured by Dr [John] Taylor that the scheme never would have taken place had not a gentleman of Shropshire [Andrew Corbet], one of his schoolfellows, spontaneously undertaken to support him at Oxford, in the character of his companion; though, in fact, he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman.

He, however, went to Oxford, and was entered a Commoner of Pembroke College on the 31st of October, 1728, being then in his nineteenth year.

The Reverend Dr Adams, who afterwards presided over Pembroke College with universal esteem, told me he was present, and gave me some account of what passed on the night of Johnson's arrival at Oxford. On that evening, his father, who had anxiously accompanied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr [the Rev. William] Jorden, who was to be his tutor.

His father seemed very full of the merits of his son, and told the company he was a good scholar, and a poet, and wrote latin verses. His figure and manner appeared strange to them; but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in and quoted Macrobius; and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself.

His tutor, Mr Jorden, fellow of Pembroke, was not, it seems, a man of such abilities as we should conceive requisite for the instructor of Samuel Johnson, who gave me the following account of him. 'He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man, and I did not profit much by his instructions. Indeed, I did not attend him much. The first day after I came to college I waited upon him, and then staid away four. On the sixth, Mr Jorden asked me why I had not attended. I answered I had been sliding in Christ-Church meadow. And this I said with as much *nonchalance* as I am now talking to you. I had no notion that I was wrong or irreverent to my tutor. BOSWELL: 'That, Sir, was great fortitude of mind.' JOHNSON: 'No, Sir; stark insensibility.'

The 'morbid melancholy,' which was lurking in his constitution, and to which we may ascribe those particularities, and that aversion to regular life, which, at a very early period, marked his character, gathered such strength in his twentieth year, as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. While he was at Lichfield, in the college vacation of the year 1729, he felt himself overwhelmed with an horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterwards was perfectly relieved; and all his labours, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence.

Johnson, upon the first violent attack of this disorder, strove to overcome it by forcible exertions. He frequently walked to Birmingham and back again, and tried many other expedients, but all in vain. His expression concerning it to me

was, 'I did not then know how to manage it.' His distress became so intolerable, that he applied to Dr [Samuel] Swinfen, physician in Lichfield, his god-father, and put into his hands a state of his case, written in Latin. Dr Swinfen was so much struck with the extraordinary acuteness, research, and eloquence of this paper, that in his zeal for his godson he shewed it to several people. His daughter, Mrs [Elizabeth] Desmoulins,⁴ who was many years humanely supported in Dr Johnson's house in London, told me, that upon his discovering that Dr Swinfen had communicated his case, he was so much offended, that he was never afterwards fully reconciled to him.

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The history of Johnson's mind as to religion is an important article.

He communicated to me the following particulars upon the subject of his religious progress. 'I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The church at Lichfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation, so I was to go and find a seat in other churches; and having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year; and still I find a great reluctance to go to church. I then became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* against it; and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*. When at Oxford, I took up [William] Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry.' From this time forward religion was the predominant object of his thoughts; though, with the just sentiments of a conscientious Christian, he lamented that his practice of its duties fell far short of what it ought to be.

How seriously Johnson was impressed with a sense of religion, even in the vigour of his youth, appears from the fol-

lowing passage in his minutes kept by way of diary : Sept. 7, 1736. I have this day entered upon my twenty-eighth year. 'Mayest thou, O God, enable me, for JESUS CHRIST's sake, to spend this in such a manner that I may receive comfort from it at the hour of death, and in the day of judgement ! Amen.'

The particular course of his reading while at Oxford, and during the time of vacation which he passed at home, cannot be traced. Enough has been said of his irregular mode of study. He told me that from his earliest years he loved to read poetry, but hardly ever read any poem to an end; that he read Shakspeare at a period so early, that the speech of the ghost in Hamlet terrified him when he was alone; that Horace's Odes were the compositions in which he took most delight, and it was long before he liked his Epistles and Satires. He told me what he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek; not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little Epigram; that the study of which he was the most fond was Metaphysicks, but he had not read much, even in that way. I always thought that he did himself injustice in his account of what he had read, and that he must have been speaking with reference to the vast portion of study which is possible, and to which a few scholars in the whole history of literature have attained.

Dr Adam Smith, than whom few were better judges on this subject, once observed to me that 'Johnson knew more books than any man alive.' He had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without submitting to the labour of perusing it from beginning to end. He had, from the irritability of his constitution, at all times, an impatience and hurry when he either read or wrote. A certain apprehension, arising from novelty, made him write his first exercise at College twice over; but he never took that trouble with any other composition; and we shall see that his most excellent works were struck off at a heat, with rapid exertion.

No man had a more ardent love of literature, or a higher respect for it than Johnson. His apartment in Pembroke Col-

lege was that upon the second floor, over the gateway. One day, while he was sitting in it quite alone, Dr [Matthew] Panting, then master of the College, whom he called 'a fine Jacobite fellow,' overheard him uttering this soliloquy in his strong, emphatick voice: 'Well, I have a mind to see what is done in other places of learning. I'll go and visit the Universities abroad. I'll go to France and Italy. I'll go to Padua. - And I'll mind my business. For an *Athenian* blockhead is the worst of all blockheads.'

Dr Adams told me that Johnson, while he was at Pembroke College, 'was caressed and loved by all about him, was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life.' But this is a striking proof of the fallacy of appearances, and how little any of us know of the real internal state even of those whom we see most frequently; for the truth is, that he was then depressed by poverty, and irritated by disease. When I mentioned to him this account as given me by Dr Adams, he said, 'Ah, Sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolick. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority.'

I do not find that he formed any close intimacies with his fellow-collegians. But Dr Adams told me that he contracted a love and regard for Pembroke College, which he retained to the last. A short time before his death he sent to that College a present of all his works, to be deposited in their library.

Being himself a poet, Johnson was peculiarly happy in mentioning how many of the sons of Pembroke were poets; adding, with a smile of sportive triumph, 'Sir, we are a nest of singing birds.'

He was not, however, blind to what he thought the defects of his own College; and I have, from the information of Dr Taylor, a very strong instance of that rigid honesty which he ever inflexibly preserved. Taylor had obtained his father's consent to be entered of Pembroke, that he might be with his schoolfellow Johnson, with whom, though some years older than himself, he was very intimate. This would have been a

great comfort to Johnson. But he fairly told Taylor that he could not, in conscience, suffer him to enter where he knew he could not have an able tutor. He then made inquiry all round the University, and having found that Mr [the Rev. Edmund] Bateman, of Christ Church, was the tutor of highest reputation, Taylor was entered of that College. Mr Bateman's lectures were so excellent, that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christ Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, and somebody [William Vyse] having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation.

His debts in College, though not great, were increasing; and his scanty remittances from Lichfield, which had all along been made with great difficulty, could be supplied no longer, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency. Compelled, therefore, by irresistible necessity, he left the College in autumn, 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three years.

And now (I had almost said *poor*) Samuel Johnson returned to his native city, destitute, and not knowing how he should gain even a decent livelihood. His father's misfortunes in trade rendered him unable to support his son; and for some time there appeared no means by which he could maintain himself. In the December of this year his father died.

In the forlorn state of his circumstances, he accepted of an offer to be employed as usher in the school of Market-Bosworth, in Leicestershire, to which it appears, from one of his little fragments of a diary, that he went on foot, on the 16th of July.

This employment was very irksome to him in every respect, and he complained grievously of it in his letters to his friend Mr Hector, who was now settled as a surgeon at Birmingham. His general aversion to this painful drudgery

was greatly enhanced by a disagreement between him and Sir Wolstan Dixey, the patron of the school, in whose house, I have been told, he officiated as a kind of domestick chaplain, so far, at least, as to say grace at table, but was treated with what he represented as intolerable harshness; and, after suffering for a few months such complicated misery, he relinquished a situation which all his life afterwards he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror.⁵ But it is probable that at this period, whatever uneasiness he may have endured, he laid the foundation of much future eminence by application to his studies.

Being now again totally unoccupied, he was invited by Mr Hector to pass some time with him at Birmingham, as his guest, at the house of Mr [Thomas] Warren, with whom Mr Hector lodged and boarded. Mr Warren was the first established bookseller in Birmingham, and was very attentive to Johnson, who he soon found could be of much service to him in his trade, by his knowledge of literature; and he even obtained the assistance of his pen in furnishing some numbers of a periodical Essay printed in the news-paper, of which Warren was proprietor.

He continued to live as Mr Hector's guest for about six months, and then hired lodgings in another part of the town, finding himself as well situated at Birmingham as he supposed he could be anywhere, while he had no settled plan of life, and very scanty means of subsistence. He made some valuable acquaintances there, amongst whom were Mr [Harry] Porter, a mercer, whose widow he afterwards married, and Mr [John] Taylor, who by his ingenuity in mechanical inventions, and his success in trade, acquired an immense fortune. But the comfort of being near Mr Hector, his old schoolfellow and intimate friend, was Johnson's chief inducement to continue here.

Johnson returned to Lichfield early in 1734, and in August that year he made an attempt to procure some little subsistence by his pen; for he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin Poems of Politian.

Notwithstanding the merit of Johnson, and the cheap price at which this book was offered, there were not subscribers enough to insure a sufficient sale; so the work never appeared, and probably, never was executed.

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Johnson had, from his early youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms.

His juvenile attachments to the fair sex were, however, very transient; and it is certain that he formed no criminal connection whatsoever. Mr Hector, who lived with him in his younger days in the utmost intimacy and social freedom, has assured me, that even at that ardent season his conduct was strictly virtuous in that respect; and that though he loved to exhilarate himself with wine, he never knew him intoxicated but once.

In a man whom religious education has secured from licentious indulgences, the passion of love, when once it has seized him, is exceedingly strong; being unimpaired by dissipation, and totally concentrated in one object. This was experienced by Johnson, when he became the fervent admirer of Mrs Porter, after her first husband's death. Miss Porter told me, that when he was first introduced to her mother, his appearance was very forbidding: he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrophula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind: and he often had, seemingly, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprize and ridicule. Mrs Porter was so much engaged by his conversation that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, 'this is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life.'

Though Mrs Porter was double the age of Johnson, and her person and manner, as described to me by the late Mr [David] Garrick, were by no means pleasing to others, 'she must have had a superiority of understanding and talents, as she certainly inspired him with more than ordinary pas-

sion; and she having signified her willingness to accept of his hand, he went to Lichfield to ask his mother's consent to the marriage, which he could not but be conscious was a very imprudent scheme, both on account of their disparity of years, and her want of fortune. But Mrs Johnson knew too well the ardour of her son's temper, and was too tender a parent to oppose his inclinations.

I know not for what reason the marriage ceremony was not performed at Birmingham; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback, I suppose in very good humour. But though Mr Topham Beauclerk used archly to mention Johnson's having told him, with much gravity, 'Sir, it was a love-marriage upon both sides,' I have had from my illustrious friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn :

9th JULY : — 'Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, Sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears.'

This, it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of conubial felicity; but there is no doubt that Johnson, though he thus shewed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs Johnson's life : and in his *Prayers and Meditations* we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased, even after her death.

He now set up a private academy, for which purpose he hired a large house, well situated near his native city. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1736, there is the following advertisement :

'At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by SAMUEL JOHNSON.'

But the only pupils that were put under his care were the celebrated David Garrick and his brother George, and a Mr [Lawrence] Offely [Offley], a young gentleman of good fortune who died early.

Johnson was not more satisfied with his situation as the master of an academy, than with that of the usher of a school; we need not wonder, therefore, that he did not keep his academy above a year and a half. From Mr Garrick's account he did not appear to have been profoundly revered by his pupils. His oddities of manner, and uncouth gesticulations, could not but be the subject of merriment to them; and, in particular, the young rogues used to listen at the door of his bed-chamber, and peep through the key-hole that they might turn into ridicule his tumultuous and awkward fondness for Mrs Johnson, whom he used to name by the familiar appellation of *Tetty* or *Tetsey*, which, like *Betty* or *Betsey*, is provincially used as a contraction for *Elisabeth*, her christian name, but which to us seems ludicrous, when applied to a woman of her age and appearance. Mr Garrick described her to me as very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with swelled cheeks of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials; flaring and fantastick in her dress, and affected both in her speech and her general behaviour. I have seen Garrick exhibit her, by his exquisite talent for mimicry, so as to excite the heartiest bursts of laughter; but he, probably, as is the case in all such representation, considerably aggravated the picture.

While Johnson kept his academy, there can be no doubt that he was insensibly furnishing his mind with various knowledge; but I have not discovered that he wrote any thing except a great part of his tragedy of *Irene*. Mr Peter Garrick, the elder brother of David, told me that he remembered Johnson's borrowing the *Turkish History* of him, in order to form his play from it.

Johnson now thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement. It is a memorable circumstance that his pupil David Garrick went thither at the same time, with intention to complete his education, and follow the profession of the law, from which he was soon diverted by his decided preference for the stage.

Johnson told me he had now written only three acts of his *Irene*, and that he retired for some time to lodgings at Greenwich, where he proceeded in it somewhat further, and used to compose, walking in the Park; but did not stay long enough at that place to finish it.

In the course of the summer he returned to Lichfield, where he had left Mrs Johnson, and there he at last finished his tragedy, which was not executed with his rapidity of composition upon other occasions, but was slowly and painfully elaborated.

Johnson's residence at Lichfield, on his return to it at this time, was only for three months; and as he had as yet seen but a small part of the wonders of the Metropolis, he had little to tell his townsmen. He related to me the following minute anecdote of this period: 'In the last age, when my mother lived in London, there were two sets of people, those who gave the wall, and those who took it; the peaceable and the quarrelsome. When I returned to Lichfield, after having been in London, my mother asked me, whether I was one of those who gave the wall, or those who took it. *Now* it is fixed that every man keeps to the right; or, if one is taking the wall, another yields it; and it is never a dispute.'

He now removed to London with Mrs Johnson; but her daughter, who had lived with them at Edial, was left with her relations in the country. His lodgings were for some time in Woodstock-street, near Hanover-square, and afterwards in Castle-street, near Cavendish-square.

His tragedy being by this time, as he thought, completely finished and fit for the stage, he was very desirous that it should be brought forward. Mr Peter Garrick told me, that Johnson and he went together to the Fountain tavern, and

read it over, and that he afterwards solicited Mr [Charles] Fleetwood, the patentee of Drury-lane theatre, to have it acted at his house; but Mr Fleetwood would not accept it, probably because it was not patronized by some man of high rank; and it was not acted till 1749, when his friend David Garrick was manager of that theatre.

The Gentleman's Magazine, begun and carried on by Mr Edward Cave, had attracted the notice and esteem of Johnson, in an eminent degree, before he came to London as an adventurer in literature. He told me, that when he first saw St John's Gate, the place where that deservedly popular miscellany was originally printed, he 'beheld it with reverence.'

It appears that he was now enlisted by Mr Cave as a regular coadjutor in his magazine, by which he probably obtained a tolerable livelihood. At what time, or by what means, he had acquired a competent knowledge both of French and Italian, I do not know; but he was so well skilled in them, as to be sufficiently qualified for a translator. That part of his labour which consisted in emendation and improvement of the productions of other contributors, like that employed in levelling ground, can be perceived only by those who had an opportunity of comparing the original with the altered copy. What we certainly know to have been done by him in this way, was the Debates in both houses of Parliament, under the name of 'The Senate of Lilliput,' sometimes with feigned denominations of the several speakers, sometimes with denominations formed of the letters of their real names, in the manner of what is called anagram, so that they might easily be decyphered.

Thus was Johnson employed, during some of the best years of his life, as a mere literary labourer 'for gain not glory,' solely to obtain an honest support. He however indulged himself in occasional little sallies, which the French so happily express by the term *jeux d'esprit*, and which will be noticed in their order, in the progress of this work.

But what first displayed his transcendent powers, and 'gave the world assurance of the MAN,' was his *London, a Poem*,

in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal : which came out in May this year, and burst forth with a splendour, the rays of which will for ever encircle his name.

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In 1742 Johnson wrote 'Proposals for Printing Bibliotheca Harleiana, or a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford.' His account of that celebrated collection of books, in which he displays the importance to literature of what the French call a *catalogue raisonné*, when the subjects of it are extensive and various, and it is executed with ability, cannot fail to impress all his readers with admiration of his philological attainments. It was afterwards prefixed to the first volume of the Catalogue, in which the Latin accounts of books were written by him. He was employed in this business by Mr Thomas Osborne the bookseller, who purchased the library for 13,000*l.*, a sum which Mr [William] Oldys says, in one of his manuscripts, was not more than the binding of the books had cost; yet, as Dr Johnson assured me, the slowness of the sale was such, that there was not much gained by it. It has been confidently related, with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne down in his shop, with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. 'Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop: it was in my own chamber.'⁷

His circumstances were at this time much embarrassed; yet his affection for his mother was so warm, and so liberal, that he took upon himself a debt of her's, which, though small in itself, was then considerable to him.

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1744: ÆTAT. 35.] — It does not appear that he wrote any thing in 1744 for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, but the Preface. But he produced one work this year, fully sufficient to maintain the high reputation which he had acquired. This was *The Life of Richard Savage*; a man, of whom it is difficult to speak impartially, without wondering that he was for some

time the intimate companion of Johnson; for his character was marked by profligacy, insolence, and ingratitude: yet, as he undoubtedly had a warm and vigorous, though unregulated mind, had seen life in all its varieties, and been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time, he could communicate to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical curiosity most eagerly desired; and as Savage's misfortunes and misconduct had reduced him to the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for bread, his visits to St John's Gate naturally brought Johnson and him together.

It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such extreme indigence, that they could not pay for a lodging; so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. Yet in these almost incredible scenes of distress, we may suppose that Savage mentioned many of the anecdotes with which Johnson afterwards enriched the life of his unhappy companion, and those of other Poets.

He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St James's-square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but in high spirits and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and 'resolved they would *stand by their country*.'

I am afraid, however, that by associating with Savage, who was habituated to the dissipation and licentiousness of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that conduct, for which, in days of greater simplicity, he was remarked by his friend Mr Hector; but was imperceptibly led into some indulgencies which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind.

In February 1744 [*The Life of Richard Savage*] came forth from the shop of [James] Roberts, between whom and Johnson I have not traced any connection, except the casual one of this publication. In Johnson's *Life of Savage* a very useful lesson is inculcated, to guard men of warm passions from a too free indulgence of them; and the various incidents are

related in so clear and animated a manner, and illuminated throughout with so much philosophy, that it is one of the most interesting narratives in the English language. Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that upon his return from Italy he met with it in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed. The rapidity with which this work was composed, is a wonderful circumstance. Johnson has been heard to say, 'I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting; but then I sat up all night.'

It is remarkable, that in this biographical disquisition there appears a very strong symptom of Johnson's prejudice against players; a prejudice which may be attributed to the following causes: first, the imperfection of his organs, which were so defective that he was not susceptible of the fine impressions which theatrical excellence produces upon the generality of mankind; secondly, the cold rejection of his tragedy; and, lastly, the brilliant success of Garrick, who had been his pupil, who had come to London at the same time with him, not in a much more prosperous state than himself, and whose talents he undoubtedly rated low, compared with his own. His being outstripped by his pupil in the race of immediate fame, as well as of fortune, probably made him feel some indignation, as thinking that whatever might be Garrick's merits in his art, the reward was too great when compared with what the most successful efforts of literary labour could attain. At all periods of his life Johnson used to talk contemptuously of players; but in this work he speaks of them with peculiar acrimony; for which, perhaps, there was formerly too much reason from the licentious and dissolute manners of those engaged in that profession. It is but justice to add, that in our own time such a change has taken place, that there is no longer room for such an unfavourable distinction.

His schoolfellow and friend, Dr Taylor, told me a pleasant

anecdote of Johnson's triumphing over his pupil David Garrick. When that great actor had played some little time at Goodman's-fields, Johnson and Taylor went to see him perform, and afterwards passed the evening at a tavern with him and old Giffard. Johnson, who was ever depreciating stage-players, after censuring some mistakes in emphasis which Garrick had committed in the course of that night's acting, said, 'The players, Sir, have got a kind of rant, with which they run on, without any regard either to accent or emphasis.' Both Garrick and Giffard were offended at this sarcasm, and endeavoured to refute it; upon which Johnson rejoined, 'Well now, I'll give you something to speak, with which you are little acquainted, and then we shall see how just my observation is. That shall be the criterion. Let me hear you repeat the ninth Commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."' Both tried at it, said Dr Taylor, and both mistook the emphasis, which should be upon *not* and *false witness*. Johnson put them right, and enjoyed his victory with great glee.

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1746: ÆTAT. 37.] — In 1746 it is probable that he was still employed upon his *Shakspeare*, which perhaps he laid aside for a time, upon account of the high expectations which were formed of [William] Warburton's edition of that great poet. It is somewhat curious, that his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended in the years 1745 and 1746, those years which were marked by a civil war in Great-Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the House of Stuart to the throne. That he had a tenderness for that unfortunate House, is well known; and some may fancifully imagine, that a sympathetick anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers: but I am inclined to think, that he was, during this time, sketching the outlines of his great philological work.

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1747: ÆTAT. 38] – This year his old pupil and friend, David Garrick, having become joint patentee and manager of Drury-lane theatre, Johnson honoured his opening of it with a Prologue, which for just and manly dramatick criticism, on the whole range of the English stage, as well as for poetical excellence, is unrivalled. Like the celebrated Epilogue to the *Distressed Mother*, it was, during the season, often called for by the audience.

But the year 1747 is distinguished as the epoch, when Johnson's arduous and important work, his DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, was announced to the world, by the publication of its Plan or *Prospectus*.

How long this immense undertaking had been the object of his contemplation, I do not know. I once asked him by what means he had attained to that astonishing knowledge of our language, by which he was enabled to realise a design of such extent, and accumulated difficulty. He told me, that 'it was not the effect of particular study; but that it had grown up in his mind insensibly.' I have been informed by Mr James Dodsley, that several years before this period, when Johnson was one day sitting in his brother Robert's shop, he heard his brother suggest to him, that a Dictionary of the English Language should be a work that would be well received by the publick; that Johnson seemed at first to catch at the proposition, but, after a pause, said, in his abrupt decisive manner, 'I believe I shall not undertake it.' That he, however, had bestowed much thought upon the subject, before he published his *Plan*, is evident from the enlarged, clear, and accurate views which it exhibits; and we find him mentioning in that tract, that many of the writers whose testimonies were to be produced as authorities, were selected by Pope; which proves that he had been furnished, probably by Mr Robert Dodsley, with whatever hints that eminent poet had contributed towards a great literary project, that had been the subject of important consideration in a former reign.

The booksellers who contracted, with Johnson, single and

unaided, for the execution of a work, which in other countries has not been effected but by the co-operating exertions of many, were Mr Robert Dodsley, Mr Charles Hitch, Mr Andrew Millar, the two Messieurs Longman, and the two Messieurs Knapton. The price stipulated was fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds.

The *Plan* was addressed to Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, then one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State; a nobleman who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design, had expressed himself in terms very favourable to its success. There is, perhaps in every thing of any consequence, a secret history which it would be amusing to know, could we have it authentically communicated. Johnson told me, 'Sir, the way in which the *Plan* of my *Dictionary* came to be inscribed to Lord Chesterfield, was that : I had neglected to write it by the time appointed. Dodsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire. I said to my friend, Dr [Richard] Bathurst, "Now if any good comes of my addressing to Lord Chesterfield, it will be ascribed to deep policy, when, in fact, it was only a casual excuse for laziness."'

Dr Adams found him one day busy at his *Dictionary*, when the following dialogue ensued. 'ADAMS. This is a great work, Sir. How are you to get all the etymologies? JOHNSON. Why, Sir, here is a shelf with Junius, and Skinner, and others; and there is a Welch gentleman who has published a collection of Welch proverbs, who will help me with the Welch. ADAMS. But, Sir, how can you do this in three years? JOHNSON. Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years. ADAMS. But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their *Dictionary*. JOHNSON. Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman.' With so much ease and pleasantry could

he talk of that prodigious labour which he had undertaken to execute.

For the mechanical part he employed, as he told me, six amanuenses; and let it be remembered by the natives of North-Britain, to whom he is supposed to have been so hostile, that five of them were of that country. To all these painful labourers, Johnson shewed a never-ceasing kindness, so far as they stood in need of it.

While the *Dictionary* was going forward, Johnson lived part of the time in Holborn, part in Gough-square, Fleet-street; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words, partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black-lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced. I have seen several of them, in which that trouble had not been taken; so that they were just as when used by the copyists. It is remarkable, that he was so attentive in the choice of the passages in which words were authorised, that one may read page after page of his *Dictionary* with improvement and pleasure; and it should not pass unobserved, that he has quoted no authour whose writings had a tendency to hurt sound religion and morality.

The necessary expence of preparing a work of such magnitude for the press, must have been a considerable deduction from the price stipulated to be paid for the copy-right. I understand that nothing was allowed by the booksellers on that account; and I remember his telling me, that a large portion of it having by mistake been written upon both sides of the paper, so as to be inconvenient for the compositor, it cost him twenty pounds to have it transcribed upon one side only.

He is now to be considered as 'tugging at his oar,' as en-

gaged in a steady continued course of occupation, sufficient to employ all his time for some years; and which was the best preventive of that constitutional melancholy which was ever lurking about him, ready to trouble his quiet. But his enlarged and lively mind could not be satisfied without more diversity of employment, and the pleasure of animated relaxation. He therefore not only exerted his talents in occasional composition very different from Lexicography, but formed a club in Ivy-lane, Paternoster-row, with a view to enjoy literary discussion, and amuse his evening hours. The members associated with him in this little society were his beloved friend Dr Richard Bathurst,⁸ Mr [John] Hawkesworth,⁹ afterwards well known by his writings, Mr John Hawkins, an attorney,¹⁰ and a few others of different professions.

PART II

1749-62

1749: ÆTAT. 40.] — In January, 1749, he published *The Vanity of Human Wishes, being the Tenth Satire of Juvenal imitated*. He, I believe, composed it the preceding year. Mrs Johnson, for the sake of country air, had lodgings at Hampstead, to which he resorted occasionally, and there the greatest part, if not the whole, of this *Imitation* was written. The fervid rapidity with which it was produced, is scarcely credible. I have heard him say, that he composed seventy lines of it in one day, without putting one of them upon paper till they were finished.

Garrick being now vested with theatrical power by being manager of Drury-lane theatre, he kindly and generously made use of it to bring out Johnson's tragedy, which had been long kept back for want of encouragement. But in this benevolent purpose he met with no small difficulty from the temper of Johnson, which could not brook that a drama which he had formed with much study, and had been obliged to keep more than the nine years of Horace, should be revised and altered at the pleasure of an actor. Yet Garrick knew well, that without some alterations it would not be fit for the stage. A violent dispute having ensued between them, Garrick applied to the Reverend Dr Taylor to interpose. Johnson was at first very obstinate. 'Sir, (said he) the fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels.'¹ He was, however, at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to comply with Garrick's wishes, so as to allow of some changes; but still there were not enough.

Dr Adams was present the first night of the representation of *Irene*, and gave me the following account: 'Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls whistling, which

alarmed Johnson's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself in a manly strain, soothed the audience, and the play went off tolerably, till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bow-string round her neck. The audience cried out "*Murder! Murder!*" She several times attempted to speak; but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive.' This passage was afterwards struck out, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it.

Notwithstanding all the support of such performers as Garrick, [Spranger] Barry, Mrs Cibber, Mrs Pritchard, and every advantage of dress and decoration, the tragedy of *Irene* did not please the publick. Mr Garrick's zeal carried it through for nine nights, so that the authour had his three nights' profits; and from a receipt signed by him, now in the hands of Mr James Dodsley, it appears that his friend Mr Robert Dodsley gave him one hundred pounds for the copy, with his usual reservation of the right of one edition.

When asked how he felt upon the ill success of his tragedy, he replied, 'Like the Monument;' meaning that he continued firm and unmoved as that column. And let it be remembered, as an admonition to the *genus irritabile* [fretful tribe] of dramattick writers, that this great man, instead of peevishly complaining of the bad taste of the town, submitted to its decision without a murmur. He had, indeed, upon all occasions, a great deference for the general opinion: 'A man (said he) who writes a book, thinks himself wiser or wittier than the rest of mankind; he supposes that he can instruct or amuse them, and the publick to whom he appeals, must, after all, be the judges of his pretensions.'

On occasion of his play being brought upon the stage, Johnson had a fancy that as a dramattick authour his dress should be more gay than what he ordinarily wore; he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He humourously observed to Mr Langton, 'that

when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes.'

His necessary attendance while his play was in rehearsal, and during its performance, brought him acquainted with many of the performers of both sexes, which produced a more favourable opinion of their profession than he had harshly expressed in his *Life of Savage*. With some of them he kept up an acquaintance as long as he and they lived, and was ever ready to shew them acts of kindness. He for a considerable time used to frequent the *Green Room*, and seemed to take delight in dissipating his gloom, by mixing in the sprightly chit-chat of the motley circle then to be found there. Mr David Hume related to me from Mr Garrick, that Johnson at last denied himself this amusement, from considerations of rigid virtue; saying, 'I'll come no more behind your scenes, David; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities.'

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1750 : ÆTAT. 41.] — In 1750 he came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified, a majestick teacher of moral and religious wisdom. The vehicle which he chose was that of a periodical paper, which he knew had been, upon former occasions, employed with great success. *The Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian*, were the last of the kind published in England, which had stood the test of a long trial; and such an interval had now elapsed since their publication, as made him justly think that, to many readers, this form of instruction would, in some degree, have the advantage of novelty. Johnson was, I think, not very happy in the choice of his title, *The Rambler*, which certainly is not suited to a series of grave and moral discourses; which the Italians have literally, but ludicrously, translated by *Il Vagabondo*. He gave Sir Joshua Reynolds the following account of its getting this name: 'What *must* be done, Sir, *will* be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper, I was at a loss how to name it. I sat down at night upon my

bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. *The Rambler* seemed the best that occurred, and I took it.'

The first paper of *The Rambler* was published on Tuesday the 20th of March, 1750; and its authour was enabled to continue it, without interruption, every Tuesday and Friday, till Saturday the 17th of March, 1752, on which day it closed. This is a strong confirmation of the truth of a remark of his, that 'a man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it;' for, notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and his labour in carrying on his *Dictionary*, he answered the stated calls of the press twice a week from the stores of his mind, during all that time.

Posterity will be astonished when they are told, upon the authority of Johnson himself, that many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been laboured with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed.

As *The Rambler* was entirely the work of one man, there was, of course, such a uniformity in its texture, as very much to exclude the charm of variety; and the grave and often solemn cast of thinking, which distinguished it from other periodical papers, made it, for some time, not generally liked. So slowly did this excellent work, of which twelve editions have now issued from the press, gain upon the world at large, that even in the closing number the authour says, 'I have never been much a favourite of the publick.'

Johnson told me, with an amiable fondness, a little pleasing circumstance relative to this work. Mrs Johnson, in whose judgement and taste he had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers of *The Rambler* had come out, 'I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this.'

The Rambler has increased in fame as in age. Soon after its first folio edition was concluded, it was published in six duo-decimo volumes; and its authour lived to see ten numer-

ous editions of it in London, beside those of Ireland and Scotland.

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1751: ÆTAT. 42.] – In 1751 we are to consider him as carrying on both his *Dictionary* and *Rambler*.

Though Johnson's circumstances were at this time far from being easy, his humane and charitable disposition was constantly exerting itself. Mrs Anna Williams, daughter of a very ingenious Welsh physician, and a woman of more than ordinary talents and literature, having come to London in hopes of being cured of a cataract in both her eyes, which afterwards ended in total blindness, was kindly received as a constant visitor at his house while Mrs Johnson lived; and after her death, having come under his roof in order to have an operation upon her eyes performed with more comfort to her than in lodgings, she had an apartment from him during the rest of her life, at all times when he had a house.² 1752: ÆTAT. 43.] – In 1752 he was almost entirely occupied with his *Dictionary*. The last paper of his *Rambler* was published March 2, this year; after which, there was a cessation for some time of any exertion of his talents as an essayist.

That there should be a suspension of his literary labours during a part of the year 1752, will not seem strange, when it is considered that soon after closing his *Rambler*, he suffered a loss which, there can be no doubt, affected him with the deepest distress. For on the 17th of March, his wife died. Why Sir John Hawkins should unwarrantably take upon him even to *suppose* that Johnson's fondness for her was *dissembled* (meaning simulated or assumed,) and to assert, that if it was not the case, 'it was a lesson he had learned by rote,' I cannot conceive; unless it proceeded from a want of similar feelings in his own breast. To argue from her being much older than Johnson, or any other circumstances, that he could not really love her, is absurd.

That his love for his wife was of the most ardent kind, and, during the long period of fifty years, was unimpaired by the lapse of time, is evident from various passages in the series of

his *Prayers and Meditations*, published by the Reverend Mr [William] Strahan, as well as from other memorials, two of which I select, as strongly marking the tenderness and sensibility of his mind.

'March 28, 1753. I kept this day as the anniversary of my Tetty's death, with prayer and tears in the morning. In the evening I prayed for her conditionally, if it were lawful.'

'April 23, 1753. I know not whether I do not too much indulge the vain longings of affection; but I hope they intenerate my heart, and that when I die like my Tetty, this affection will be acknowledged in a happy interview, and that in the mean time I am incited by it to piety. I will, however, not deviate too much from common and received methods of devotion.'

Her wedding-ring, when she became his wife, was, after her death, preserved by him, as long as he lived, with an affectionate care, in a little round wooden box, in the inside of which he pasted a slip of paper, thus inscribed by him in fair characters, as follows :

'Eheu!
Eliz. Johnson,
Nupta Jul, 9^o 1736,
Mortua, eheu!
Mart. 17^o 1752.'

After his death, Mr Francis Barber, his faithful servant and residuary legatee,³ offered this memorial of tenderness to Mrs Lucy Porter, Mrs Johnson's daughter; but she having declined to accept of it, he had it enamelled as a mourning ring for his old master, and presented it to his wife, Mrs Barber, who now has it.

I have, indeed, been told by Mrs Desmoulins, who, before her marriage, lived for some time with Mrs Johnson at Hampstead, that she indulged herself in country air and nice living, at an unsuitable expense, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London, and that she by no means treated him with that complacency which is the most engaging quality in a wife. But all this is perfectly compatible with

his fondness for her, especially when it is remembered that he had a high opinion of her understanding, and that the impressions which her beauty, real or imaginary, had originally made upon his fancy, being continued by habit, had not been effaced, though she herself was doubtless much altered for the worse. The dreadful shock of separation took place in the night; and he immediately dispatched a letter to his friend, the Reverend Dr Taylor, which, as Taylor told me, expressed grief in the strongest manner he had ever read; so that it is much to be regretted it has not been preserved. The letter was brought to Dr Taylor, at his house in the Cloisters, Westminster, about three in the morning; and as it signified an earnest desire to see him, he got up, and went to Johnson as soon as he was dressed, and found him in tears and in extreme agitation. After being a little while together, Johnson requested him to join with him in prayer. He then prayed extempore, as did Dr Taylor; and thus, by means of that piety which was ever his primary object, his troubled mind was, in some degree, soothed and composed.

From Mr Francis Barber I have had the following authentic and artless account of the situation in which he found him recently and after his wife's death :

'He was in great affliction. Mrs Williams was then living in his house, which was in Gough-square. He was busy with the Dictionary. Mr [Robert] Shiels [one of his amanuenses] and some others of the gentlemen who had formerly written for him, used to come about him. He had then little for himself, but frequently sent money to Mr Shiels when in distress. The friends who visited him at that time, were chiefly Dr Bathurst, and Mr Diamond, an apothecary in Cork-street, Burlington-gardens, with whom he and Mrs Williams generally dined every Sunday. There was a talk of his going to Iceland with him, which would probably have happened had he lived. There were also Mr Cave, Dr Hawkesworth, Mr [John] Ryland, merchant on Tower Hill, Mrs [Mary] Masters, the poetess, who lived with Mr Cave, Mrs [Elizabeth] Carter,⁴ and sometimes Mrs [Catharine] Macaulay,⁵ also Mrs [Ann Hedges] Gardiner, wife of a tallow-chandler on

Snow-hill, not in the learned way, but a worthy good woman; Mr (now Sir Joshua) Reynolds; Mr [Andrew] Millar, Mr Dodsley, Mr [Joseph] Bouquet, Mr [John] Payne of Paternoster-row, booksellers; Mr Strahan, the printer; the Earl of Orrery, Lord Southwell, Mr Garrick.'

Many are, no doubt, omitted in this catalogue of his friends, and, in particular, his humble friend Mr Robert Levet,⁶ an obscure practiser in physick amongst the lower people, his fees being sometimes very small sums, sometimes whatever provisions his patients could afford him; but of such extensive practice in that way, that Mrs Williams has told me, his walk was from Houndsditch to Marybone. It appears from Johnson's diary that their acquaintance commenced about the year 1746; and such was Johnson's predilection for him, and fanciful estimation of his moderate abilities, that I have heard him say he should not be satisfied, though attended by all the College of Physicians, unless he had Mr Levet with him. Ever since I was acquainted with Dr Johnson, and many years before, as I have been assured by those who knew him earlier, Mr Levet had an apartment in his house, or his chambers, and waited upon him every morning, through the whole course of his late and tedious breakfast. He was of a strange grotesque appearance, stiff and formal in his manner, and seldom said a word while any company was present.

The circle of his friends, indeed, at this time was extensive and various, far beyond what has been generally imagined. To trace his acquaintance with each particular person, if it could be done, would be a task, of which the labour would not be repaid by the advantage. But exceptions are to be made; one of which must be a friend so eminent as Sir Joshua Reynolds, with whom he maintained an uninterrupted intimacy to the last hour of his life. When Johnson lived in Castle-street, Cavendish-square, he used frequently to visit two ladies, who lived opposite to him, Miss Cotterells, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. Reynolds used also to visit there, and thus they met.

Sir Joshua told me a pleasant characteristic anecdote of

Johnson about the time of their first acquaintance. When they were one evening together at the Miss Cotterells', the then Duchess of Argyle and another lady of high rank came in. Johnson thinking that the Miss Cotterells were too much engrossed by them, and that he and his friend were neglected, as low company of whom they were somewhat ashamed, grew angry; and resolving to shock their supposed pride, by making their great visitors imagine that his friend and he were low indeed, he addressed himself in a loud tone to Mr Reynolds, saying, 'How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were to *work as hard* as we could?' – as if they had been common mechanicks.

His acquaintance with Bennet Langton, Esq. of Langton, in Lincolnshire, another much valued friend, commenced soon after the conclusion of his *Rambler*; which that gentleman, then a youth, had read with so much admiration, that he came to London chiefly with the view of endeavouring to be introduced to its authour. By a fortunate chance he happened to take lodgings in a house where Mr Levet frequently visited; and having mentioned his wish to his landlady, she introduced him to Mr Levet, who readily obtained Johnson's permission to bring Mr Langton to him; as, indeed, Johnson, during the whole course of his life, had no shyness, real or affected, but was easy of access to all who were properly recommended, and even wished to see numbers at his *levee*, as his morning circle of company might, with strict propriety, be called. Mr Langton was exceedingly surprised when the sage first appeared. He had not received the smallest intimation of his figure, dress, or manner. From perusing his writings, he fancied he should see a decent, well-drest, in short, a remarkably decorous philosopher. Instead of which, down from his bed-chamber, about noon, came, as newly risen, a huge uncouth figure, with a little dark wig which scarcely covered his head, and his clothes hanging loose about him. But his conversation was so rich, so animated, and so forcible, and his religious and political notions so congenial with those in which Mr Langton had been educated, that he conceived for him that veneration and attachment which he ever pre-

served. Johnson was not the less ready to love Mr Langton, for his being of a very ancient family; for I have heard him say, with pleasure, 'Langton, Sir, has a grant of free warren from Henry the Second; and Cardinal Stephen Langton, in King John's reign, was of this family.'

Mr Langton afterwards went to pursue his studies at Trinity College, Oxford, where he formed an acquaintance with his fellow student, Mr Topham Beauclerk; who, though their opinions and modes of life were so different, that it seemed utterly improbable that they should at all agree, had so ardent a love of literature, so acute an understanding, such elegance of manners, and so well discerned the excellent qualities of Mr Langton, a gentleman eminent not only for worth and learning, but for an inexhaustible fund of entertaining conversation, that they became intimate friends.

Johnson, soon after this acquaintance began, passed a considerable time at Oxford. He at first thought it strange that Langton should associate so much with one who had the character of being loose, both in his principles and practice; but, by degrees, he himself was fascinated. Mr Beauclerk's being of the St Alban's family, and having, in some particulars, a resemblance to Charles the Second, contributed, in Johnson's imagination, to throw a lustre upon his other qualities; and, in a short time, the moral, pious Johnson, and the gay, dissipated Beauclerk, were companions. 'What a coalition! (said Garrick, when he heard of this;) I shall have my old friend to bail out of the Roundhouse.' But I can bear testimony that it was a very agreeable association. Beauclerk was too polite, and valued learning and wit too much, to offend Johnson by sallies of infidelity or licentiousness; and Johnson delighted in the good qualities of Beauclerk, and hoped to correct the evil. Innumerable were the scenes in which Johnson was amused by these young men. Beauclerk could take more liberty with him, than any body with whom I ever saw him; but, on the other hand, Beauclerk was not spared by his respectable companion, when reproof was proper.

One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a

tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a nightcap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour agreed to their proposal: 'What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you.' He was soon drest, and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden, where the greengrocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers, just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked; while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

'Short, O snort men be thy reign,
And give us to the world again!'

They did not stay long; but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day: but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young Ladies. Johnson scolded him for 'leaving his social friends, to go and sit with a set of wretched *un-idea'd* girls.' Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, 'I heard of your frolick t'other night. You'll be in the Chronicle.' Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, '*He* durst not do such a thing. His *wife* would not *let* him!'

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1753 : ÆTAT. 44.] – He now relieved the drudgery of his *Dictionary*, and the melancholy of his grief, by taking an active part in the composition of *The Adventurer*, in which he began to write April 10, marking his essays with the signature T, by which most of his papers in that collection are distinguished.

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1754 : ÆTAT. 45.] – In 1754 I can trace nothing published by him, except his numbers of *The Adventurer*, and 'The Life of Edward Cave,' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February.

The *Dictionary*, we may believe, afforded Johnson full occupation this year. As it approached to its conclusion, he probably worked with redoubled vigour, as seamen increase their exertion and alacrity when they have a near prospect of their haven.

Lord Chesterfield, to whom Johnson had paid the high compliment of addressing to his Lordship the *Plan* of his *Dictionary*, had behaved to him in such a manner as to excite his contempt and indignation. The world has been for many years amused with a story confidently told, and as confidently repeated with additional circumstances, that a sudden disgust was taken by Johnson upon occasion of his having been one day kept long in waiting in his Lordship's antechamber, for which the reason assigned was, that he had company with him; and that at last, when the door opened, out walked Colley Cibber; and that Johnson was so violently provoked when he found for whom he had been so long excluded, that he went away in a passion, and never would return. But Johnson himself assured me, that there was not the least foundation [for this story]. He told me that there never was any particular incident which produced a quarrel between Lord Chesterfield and him; but that his Lordship's continued neglect was the reason why he resolved to have no connection with him. When the *Dictionary* was upon the eve of publication, Lord Chesterfield, who, it is said, had flattered himself with expectations that Johnson would dedicate

the work to him, attempted, in a courtly manner, to sooth, and insinuate himself with the Sage, conscious, as it should seem, of the cold indifference with which he had treated its learned authour; and further attempted to conciliate him, by writing two papers in *The World*, in recommendation of the work; and it must be confessed, that they contain some studied compliments, so finely turned, that if there had been no previous offence, it is probable that Johnson would have been highly delighted. Praise, in general, was pleasing to him; but by praise from a man of rank and elegant accomplishments, he was peculiarly gratified.

This courtly device failed of its effect. Johnson, who thought that 'all was false and hollow', despised the honeyed words, and was even indignant that Lord Chesterfield should, for a moment, imagine that he could be the dupe of such an artifice. His expression to me concerning Lord Chesterfield, upon this occasion, was, 'Sir, after making great professions, he had, for many years, taken no notice of me; but when my *Dictionary* was coming out, he fell a scribbling in *The World* about it. Upon which, I wrote him a letter expressed in civil terms, but such as might shew him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him.'

Johnson having now explicitly avowed his opinion of Lord Chesterfield, did not refrain from expressing himself concerning that nobleman with pointed freedom: 'This man (said he) I thought had been a Lord among wits; but, I find, he is only a wit among Lords!' And when his *Letters* to his natural son were published, he observed, that 'they teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing master.'

The character of 'a respectable Hottentot,' in Lord Chesterfield's letters, has been generally understood to be meant for Johnson, and I have no doubt that it was.

On the 6th of March came out Lord Bolingbroke's works, published by Mr David Mallet. The wild and pernicious ravings, under the name of *Philosophy*, which were thus ushered into the world, gave great offence to all well-principled men. Johnson, hearing of their tendency, which

nobody disputed, was roused with a just indignation, and pronounced this memorable sentence upon the noble authour and his editor. 'Sir, he was a scoundrel, and a coward : a scoundrel, for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half a crown to a beggarly Scotchman, to draw the trigger after his death !'

Johnson this year found an interval of leisure to make an excursion to Oxford, for the purpose of consulting the libraries there. Of this, and of many interesting circumstances concerning him, during a part of his life when he conversed but little with the world, I am enabled to give a particular account, by the liberal communications of the Reverend Mr Thomas Warton, who obligingly furnished me with several of our common friend's letters, which he illustrated with notes.⁷ These I shall insert in their proper places.

Of his conversation while at Oxford at this time, Mr Warton preserved and communicated to me the following memorial, which, though not written with all the care and attention which that learned and elegant writer bestowed on those compositions which he intended for the publick eye, is so happily expressed in an easy style, that I should injure it by any alteration :

'When Johnson came to Oxford in 1754, the long vacation was beginning, and most people were leaving the place. This was the first time of his being there, after quitting the University. The next morning after his arrival, he wished to see his old College, *Pembroke*. I went with him. He was highly pleased to find all the College-servants which he had left there still remaining, particularly a very old butler; and expressed great satisfaction at being recognised by them, and conversed with them familiarly. He waited on the master, Dr [John] Radcliffe, who received him very coldly. Johnson at least expected, that the master would order a copy of his Dictionary, now near publication : but the master did not choose to talk on the subject, never asked Johnson to dine, nor even to visit him, while he stayed at Oxford. After we had left the lodgings, Johnson said to me, "*There* lives a man,

who lives by the revenues of literature, and will not lift a finger to support it. If I come to live at Oxford, I shall take up my abode at Trinity." We then called on the Reverend Mr [John] Meeke, one of the fellows, and of Johnson's standing. Here was a most cordial greeting on both sides. On leaving him, Johnson said, "I used to think Meeke had excellent parts, when we were boys together at the College: but, alas!

'Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!'

I remember, at the classical lecture in the Hall, I could not bear Meeke's superiority, and I tried to sit as far from him as I could, that I might not hear him construe."

When he left Mr Meeke, he added, "About the same time of life, Meeke was left behind at Oxford to feed on a Fellowship, and I went to London to get my living: now, Sir, see the difference of our literary characters!"

The degree of Master of Arts, which, it has been observed, could not be obtained for him at an early period of his life, was now considered as an honour of considerable importance, in order to grace the title-page of his *Dictionary*; and his character in the literary world being by this time deservedly high, his friends thought that, if proper exertions were made, the University of Oxford would pay him the compliment.

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1755: ÆTAT. 46.] — In 1755 we behold him to a great advantage; his degree of Master of Arts conferred upon him, his *Dictionary* published, his correspondence animated, his benevolence exercised.

Mr Andrew Millar, bookseller in the Strand, took the principal charge of conducting the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary*; and as the patience of the proprietors was repeatedly tried and almost exhausted, by their expecting that the work would be completed within the time which Johnson had sanguinely supposed, the learned authour was often goaded to dispatch, more especially as he had received all

the copy-money, by different drafts, a considerable time before he had finished his task. When the messenger who carried the last sheet to Millar returned, Johnson asked him, 'Well, what did he say?' – 'Sir, (answered the messenger) he said, thank GOD I have done with him.' 'I am glad (replied Johnson with a smile) that he thanks GOD for any thing.'

The *Dictionary*, with a *Grammar and History of the English Language*, being now at length published, in two volumes folio, the world contemplated with wonder so stupendous a work atchieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies. Vast as his powers were, I cannot but think that his imagination deceived him, when he supposed that by constant application he might have performed the task in three years. Let the Preface be attentively perused, in which is given, in a clear, strong, and glowing style, a comprehensive, yet particular view of what he had done; and it will be evident, that the time he employed upon it was comparatively short.

A few of his definitions must be admitted to be erroneous. Thus, *Windward* and *Leeward*, though directly of opposite meaning, are defined identically the same way; as to which inconsiderable specks it is enough to observe, that his Preface announces that he was aware there might be many such in so immense a work; nor was he at all disconcerted when an instance was pointed out to him. A lady once asked him how he came to define *Pastern* the *knee* of a horse: instead of making an elaborate defence, as she expected, he at once answered, 'Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance.' His definition of *Network* has been often quoted with sportive malignity, as obscuring a thing in itself very plain.⁸

His introducing his own opinions, and even prejudices, under general definitions of words, while at the same time the original meaning of the words is not explained, as his *Whig*, *Pension*, *Oats*, *Excise*, and a few more, cannot be fully defended, and must be placed to the account of capricious and humourous indulgence.⁹ Talking to me upon this subject when we were at Ashbourne in 1777, he mentioned a still stronger instance of the predominance of his private

feelings in the composition of this work, than any now to be found in it. 'You know, Sir, Lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant "one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter," I added, *Sometimes we say a GOWER*. Thus it went to the press; but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out.'

Let it, however, be remembered, that this indulgence does not display itself only in sarcasm towards others, but sometimes in playful allusion to the notions commonly entertained of his own laborious task. Thus: '*Grub-street*, the name of a street in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, *dictionaries*, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *Grub-street*.' - '*Lexicographer*, a writer of dictionaries, a *harmless drudge*.'

At the time when he was concluding his very eloquent Preface, Johnson's mind appears to have been in such a state of depression, that we cannot contemplate without wonder the vigorous and splendid thoughts which so highly distinguish that performance. 'I (says he) may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave; and success and miscarriage are empty sounds. I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.'

It must undoubtedly seem strange, that the conclusion of his Preface should be expressed in terms so desponding, when it is considered that the authour was then only in his forty-sixth year. But we must ascribe its gloom to that miserable dejection of spirits to which he was constitutionally subject, and which was aggravated by the death of his wife two years before.

The celebrated Mr [John] Wilkes, whose notions and habits of life were very opposite to his, but who was ever eminent for literature and vivacity, sallied forth with a little *Jeu d'Esprit* upon the following passage in his Grammar of

the English Tongue, prefixed to the *Dictionary*: 'H seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable.' In an Essay printed in *The Publick Advertiser*, this lively writer enumerated many instances in opposition to this remark; for example, 'The authour of this observation must be a man of a quick *apprehension*, and of a most *comprehensive* genius.' The position is undoubtedly expressed with too much latitude.

This light sally, we may suppose, made no great impression on our Lexicographer; for we find that he did not alter the passage till many years afterwards.

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1756: ÆTAT. 47.] — In 1756 Johnson found that the great fame of his *Dictionary* had not set him above the necessity of 'making provision for the day that was passing over him.' No royal or noble patron extended a munificent hand to give independence to the man who had conferred stability on the language of his country.

He had spent, during the progress of the work, the money for which he had contracted to write his *Dictionary*. We have seen that the reward of his labour was only fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds; and when the expence of amanuenses and paper, and other articles are deducted, his clear profit was very inconsiderable. I once said to him, 'I am sorry, Sir, you did not get more for your *Dictionary*.' His answer was, 'I am sorry, too. But it was very well. The booksellers are generous, liberal-minded men.' He, upon all occasions, did ample justice to their character in this respect. He considered them as the patrons of literature; and, indeed, although they have eventually been considerable gainers by his *Dictionary*, it is to them that we owe its having been undertaken and carried through at the risk of great expence, for they were not absolutely sure of being indemnified.

On the first day of this year we find from his private devotions, that he had then recovered from sickness; and in February that his eye was restored to its use. The pious gratitude with which he acknowledges mercies upon every occa-

sion is very edifying; as is the humble submission which he breathes, when it is the will of his heavenly Father to try him with afflictions. As such dispositions become the state of man here, and are the true effects of religious discipline, we cannot but venerate in Johnson one of the most exercised minds that our holy religion hath ever formed. If there be any thoughtless enough to suppose such exercise the weakness of a great understanding, let them look up to Johnson and be convinced that what he so earnestly practised must have a rational foundation.

His works this year were, an abstract or epitome, in octavo, of his folio *Dictionary*, and a few essays in a monthly publication, entitled, *The Universal Visiter*. Christopher Smart, with whose unhappy vacillation of mind he sincerely sympathised, was one of the stated undertakers of this miscellany; and it was to assist him that Johnson sometimes employed his pen.

He engaged also to superintend and contribute largely to another monthly publication, entitled *The Literary Magazine, or Universal Review*; the first number of which came out in May this year. What were his emoluments from this undertaking, and what other writers were employed in it, I have not discovered. He continued to write in it, with intermissions, till the fifteenth number; and I think that he never gave better proofs of the force, acuteness, and vivacity of his mind, than in this miscellany, whether we consider his original essays, or his reviews of the works of others.

His defence of tea against Mr Jonas Hanway's violent attack upon that elegant and popular beverage, shews how very well a man of genius can write upon the slightest subject, when he writes, as the Italians say, *con amore*: I suppose no person ever enjoyed with more relish the infusion of that fragrant leaf than Johnson. The quantities which he drank of it at all hours were so great, that his nerves must have been uncommonly strong, not to have been extremely relaxed by such an intemperate use of it. He assured me, that he never felt the least inconvenience from it; which is a proof that the fault of his constitution was rather a too great ten-

sion of fibres, than the contrary. Mr Hanway wrote an angry answer to Johnson's review of his *Essay on Tea*, and Johnson, after a full and deliberate pause, made a reply to it; the only instance, I believe, in the whole course of his life, when he condescended to oppose any thing that was written against him.

He this year resumed his scheme of giving an edition of *Shakspeare* with notes. He issued Proposals of considerable length, in which he shewed that he perfectly well knew what a variety of research such an undertaking required; but his indolence prevented him from pursuing it with that diligence which alone can collect those scattered facts that genius, however acute, penetrating, and luminous, cannot discover by its own force. It is remarkable, that at this time his fancied activity was for the moment so vigorous, that he promised his work should be published before Christmas, 1757. Yet nine years elapsed before it saw the light.

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1757 : ÆTAT. 48.] – In 1757 it does not appear that he published any thing, except some of those articles in *The Literary Magazine*, which have been mentioned.

Dr [Charles] Burney has kindly favoured me with the following memorandum, which I take the liberty to insert in his own genuine easy style. I love to exhibit sketches of my illustrious friend by various eminent hands.

'Soon after this, Mr Burney, during a visit to the capital, had an interview with him in Gough-square, where he dined and drank tea with him, and was introduced to the acquaintance of Mrs Williams. After dinner, Mr Johnson proposed to Mr Burney to go up with him into his garret, which being accepted, he there found about five or six Greek folios, a deal writing-desk, and a chair and a half. Johnson giving to his guest the entire seat, tottered himself on one with only three legs and one arm. Here he shewed him some volumes of his *Shakspeare* already printed, to prove that he was in earnest. Upon Mr Burney's opening the first volume, at the *Merchant of Venice*, he observed to him, that he seemed to

be more severe on Warburton than [Lewis] Theobald. "O poor Tib. ! (said Johnson) he was ready knocked down to my hands; Warburton stands between me and him." "But, Sir, (said Mr Burney,) you'll have Warburton upon your bones, won't you?" "No, Sir; he'll not come out : he'll only growl in his den." "But you think, Sir, that Warburton is a superiour critick to Theobald?" "O, Sir, he'd make two-and-fifty Theobalds, cut into slices ! The worst of Warburton is, that he has a rage for saying something, when there's nothing to be said."

On the fifteenth of April he began a new periodical paper, entitled *The Idler*, which came out every Saturday in a weekly news-paper, called *The Universal Chronicle, or Weekly Gazette*.

The Idler is evidently the work of the same mind which produced *The Rambler*, but has less body and more spirit. It has more variety of real life, and greater facility of language. He describes the miseries of idleness, with the lively sensations of one who has felt them; and in his private memorandums while engaged in it, we find 'This year I hope to learn diligence.' Many of these excellent essays were written as hastily as an ordinary letter. Mr Langton remembers Johnson, when on a visit at Oxford, asking him one evening how long it was till the post went out; and on being told about half an hour, he exclaimed, 'then we shall do very well.' He upon this instantly sat down and finished an *Idler*, which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr Langton having signified a wish to read it, 'Sir, (said he) you shall not do more than I have done myself.' He then folded it up and sent it off.

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1759: ÆTAT. 50.] — In 1759, in the month of January, his mother died at the great age of ninety, an event which deeply affected him; not that 'his mind had acquired no firmness by the contemplation of mortality; but that his reverential affection for her was not abated by years, as indeed he retained all his tender feelings even to the latest period of his

life. I have been told that he regretted much his not having gone to visit his mother for several years, previous to her death. But he was constantly engaged in literary labours which confined him to London; and though he had not the comfort of seeing his aged parent, he contributed liberally to her support.

Soon after this event, he wrote his *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*. The late Mr Strahan the printer told me, that Johnson wrote it, that with the profits he might defray the expence of his mother's funeral, and pay some little debts which she had left. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that he composed it in the evenings of one week, sent it to the press in portions as it was written, and had never since read it over. Mr Strahan, Mr Johnston, and Mr Dodsley purchased it for a hundred pounds, but afterwards paid him twenty-five pounds more, when it came to a second edition.

He now refreshed himself by an excursion to Oxford, of which the following short characteristical notice, in his own words, is preserved : —

'I have been in my gown ever since I came here. It was, at my first coming, quite new and handsome. I have swum thrice, which I had disused for many years. I have proposed to Vansittart, [Dr Robert Vansittart]¹⁰ climbing over the wall, but he has refused me. And I have clapped my hands till they are sore, at Dr [William] King's speech.'¹¹

His negro servant, Francis Barber, having left him, and been some time at sea, not pressed as has been supposed, but with his own consent, it appears from a letter to John Wilkes, Esq., from Dr [Tobias] Smollet[t], that his master kindly interested himself in procuring his release from a state of life of which Johnson always expressed the utmost abhorrence.¹² He said, 'No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned.' And at another time, 'A man in a jail has more room, better food, and commonly better company.'

Mr Wilkes, who upon all occasions has acted, as a private gentleman, with most polite liberality, applied to his friend

PART II: 1749-62

Sir George Hay, then one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty; and Francis Barber was discharged, as he has told me, without any wish of his own. He found his old master in Chambers in the Inner Temple, and returned to his service.

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1761: ÆTAT. 52.] – In 1761 Johnson appears to have done little. He was still, no doubt, proceeding in his edition of *Shakspeare*; but what advances he made in it cannot be ascertained. He certainly was at this time not active; for in his scrupulous examination of himself on Easter eve, he laments, in his too rigorous mode of censuring his own conduct, that his life, since the communion of the preceding Easter, had been ‘dissipated and useless.’ He, however, contributed this year the Preface to [Richard] Rolt’s *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, in which he displays such a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the subject, as might lead the reader to think that its authour had devoted all his life to it. I asked him whether he knew much of Rolt, and of his work. ‘Sir, (said he) I never saw the man, and never read the book. The booksellers wanted a Preface to a *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. I knew very well what such a Dictionary should be, and I wrote a Preface accordingly.’

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1762: ÆTAT. 53.] – The accession of George the Third to the throne of these kingdoms, opened a new and brighter prospect to men of literary merit, who had been honoured with no mark of royal favour in the preceding reign. His present Majesty’s education in this country, as well as his taste and beneficence, prompted him to be the patron of science and the arts; and early this year Johnson, having been represented to him as a very learned and good man, without any certain provision, his Majesty was pleased to grant him a pension of three hundred pounds a year.

Mr Thomas Sheridan and Mr [Arthur] Murphy,¹³ who then lived a good deal both with him and Mr [Alexander]

Wedderburne,¹⁴ told me, that they previously talked with Johnson upon this matter, and that it was perfectly understood by all parties that the pension was merely honorary. Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that Johnson called on him after his Majesty's intention had been notified to him, and said he wished to consult his friends as to the propriety of his accepting this mark of the royal favour, after the definitions which he had given in his *Dictionary of pension and pensioners*. He said he would not have Sir Joshua's answer till next day, when he would call again, and desired he might think of it. Sir Joshua answered that he was clear to give his opinion then, that there could be no objection to his receiving from the King a reward for literary merit; and that certainly the definitions in his *Dictionary* were not applicable to him. Johnson, it should seem, was satisfied, for he did not call again till he had accepted the pension, and had waited on Lord Bute [the Prime Minister] to thank him. He then told Sir Joshua that Lord Bute said to him expressly, 'It is not given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done.' His Lordship, he said, behaved in the handsomest manner. He repeated the words twice, that he might be sure Johnson heard them, and thus set his mind perfectly at ease.

This year his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds paid a visit of some weeks to his native county, Devonshire, in which he was accompanied by Johnson, who was much pleased with this jaunt, and declared he had derived from it a great accession of new ideas. He was entertained at the seats of several noblemen and gentlemen in the West of England; but the greatest part of the time was passed at Plymouth, where the magnificence of the navy, the ship-building and all its circumstances, afforded him a grand subject of contemplation. The Commissioner of the Dock-yard [Sir Frederick Rogers] paid him the compliment of ordering the yacht to convey him and his friend to the Eddystone, to which they accordingly sailed. But the weather was so tempestuous that they could not land.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom I was obliged for my in-

formation concerning this excursion, mentions a very characteristic anecdote of Johnson while at Plymouth. Having observed that in consequence of the Dock-yard a new town had arisen about two miles off as a rival to the old; and knowing from his sagacity, and just observation of human nature, that it is certain if a man hates at all, he will hate his next neighbour; he concluded that this new and rising town could not but excite the envy and jealousy of the old, in which conjecture he was very soon confirmed; he therefore set himself resolutely on the side of the old town, the *established* town, in which his lot was cast, considering it as a kind of duty to *stand by* it. He accordingly entered warmly into its interests, and upon every occasion talked of the *dockers*, as the inhabitants of the new town were called, as upstarts and aliens. Plymouth is very plentifully supplied with water by a river brought into it from a great distance, which is so abundant that it runs to waste in the town. The Dock, or New-town, being totally destitute of water, petitioned Plymouth that a small portion of the conduit might be permitted to go to them, and this was now under consideration. Johnson, affecting to entertain the passions of the place, was violent in opposition; and, half-laughing at himself for his pretended zeal where he had no concern, exclaimed, 'No, no! I am against the *dockers*; I am a Plymouth man. Rogues! let them die of thirst. They shall not have a drop!'

PART III

1763

1763 : ÆTAT. 54.] – This is to me a memorable year; for in it I had the happiness to obtain the acquaintance of that extraordinary man whose memoirs I am now writing; an acquaintance which I shall ever esteem as one of the most fortunate circumstances in my life. Though then but two-and-twenty, I had for several years read his works with delight and instruction, and had the highest reverence for their author, which had grown up in my fancy into a kind of mysterious veneration, by figuring to myself a state of solemn elevated abstraction, in which I supposed him to live in the immense metropolis of London. Mr [Francis] Gentleman, a native of Ireland, who passed some years in Scotland as a player, and as an instructor in the English language, a man whose talents and worth were depressed by misfortunes, had given me a representation of the figure and manner of DIC-TIONARY JOHNSON! as he was then generally called; and during my first visit to London, which was for three months in 1760, Mr [Samuel] Derrick the poet, who was Gentleman's friend and countryman, flattered me with hopes that he would introduce me to Johnson, an honour of which I was very ambitious. But he never found an opportunity; which made me doubt that he had promised to do what was not in his power; till Johnson some years afterwards told me, 'Derrick, Sir, might very well have introduced you. I had a kindness for Derrick, and am sorry he is dead.'

In the summer of 1761 Mr Thomas Sheridan was at Edinburgh, and delivered lectures upon the English Language and Publick Speaking to large and respectable audiences. I was often in his company, and heard him frequently expatiate upon Johnson's extraordinary knowledge, talents, and virtues, repeat his pointed sayings, describe his particu-

lars, and boast of his being his guest sometimes till two or three in the morning. At his house I hoped to have many opportunities of seeing the sage, as Mr Sheridan obligingly assured me I should not be disappointed.

When I returned to London in the end of 1762, to my surprise and regret I found an irreconcilable difference had taken place between Johnson and Sheridan. A pension of two hundred pounds a year had been given to Sheridan, Johnson, who, as has been already mentioned, thought slightly of Sheridan's art, upon hearing that he was also pensioned, exclaimed, 'What! have they given *him* a pension? Then it is time for me to give up mine.'

Johnson complained that a man [James Macpherson] who disliked him repeated his sarcasm to Mr Sheridan, without telling him what followed; which was, that after a pause he added, 'However, I am glad that Mr Sheridan has a pension, for he is a very good man.' Sheridan could never forgive this hasty contemptuous expression. It rankled in his mind; and though I informed him of all that Johnson said, and that he would be very glad to meet him amicably, he positively declined repeated offers which I made, and once went off abruptly from a house where he and I were engaged to dine, because he was told that Dr Johnson was to be there. I have no sympathetick feeling with such persevering resentment.

Mr Thomas Davies, the actor, who then kept a bookseller's shop in Russel-street, Covent-garden, told me that Johnson was very much his friend, and came frequently to his house, where he more than once invited me to meet him; but by some unlucky accident or other he was prevented from coming to us.

Mr Thomas Davies was a man of good understanding and talents, with the advantage of a liberal education. Though somewhat pompous, he was an entertaining companion; and his literary performances have no inconsiderable share of merit. He was a friendly and very hospitable man. Both he and his wife, (who has been celebrated for her beauty,) though upon the stage for many years, maintained an uniform decency of character; and Johnson esteemed them, and lived

in as easy an intimacy with them as with any family which he used to visit. Mr Davies recollected several of Johnson's remarkable sayings, and was one of the best of the many imitators of his voice and manner, while relating them. He increased my impatience more and more to see the extraordinary man whose works I highly valued, and whose conversation was reported to be so peculiarly excellent.

At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr Davies's back-parlour, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop; and Mr Davies having perceived him through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us, – he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, 'Look, my Lord, it comes.' I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his *Dictionary*, in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation, which was the first picture his friend did for him, which Sir Joshua very kindly presented to me. Mr Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollecting his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, 'Don't tell where I come from.' – 'From Scotland,' cried Davies roguishly. 'Mr Johnson, (said I) I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it.' I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as light pleasantry to sooth and conciliate him, and not as an humiliating abasement at the expence of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for with that quickness of wit for which he was so remarkable, he seized the expression 'come from Scotland,' which I used in the sense of being of that country, and, as if I had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, 'That, Sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help.' This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we had sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might

come next. He then addressed himself to Davies : 'What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings.' Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, I ventured to say, 'O, Sir, I cannot think Mr Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you.' 'Sir, (said he, with a stern look,) I have known David Garrick longer than you have done : and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject.' Perhaps I deserved this check; for it was rather presumptuous in me, an entire stranger, to express any doubt of the justice of his animadversion upon his old acquaintance and pupil. I now felt myself much mortified, and began to think that the hope which I had long indulged of obtaining his acquaintance was blasted. And, in truth, had not my ardour been uncommonly strong, and my resolution uncommonly persevering, so rough a reception might have deterred me for ever from making any further attempts. Fortunately, however, I remained upon the field not wholly discomfited; and was soon rewarded by hearing some of his conversation.

I was highly pleased with the extraordinary vigour of his conversation, and regretted that I was drawn away from it by an engagement at another place. I had, for a part of the evening, been left alone with him, and had ventured to make an observation now and then, which he received very civilly; so that I was satisfied that though there was a roughness in his manner, there was no ill-nature in his disposition. Davies followed me to the door, and when I complained to him a little of the hard blows which the great man had given me, he kindly took upon him to console me by saying, 'Don't be uneasy. I can see he likes you very well.'

A few days afterwards I called on Davies, and asked him if he thought I might take the liberty of waiting on Mr Johnson at his Chambers in the Temple. He said I certainly might, and that Mr Johnson would take it as a compliment. So upon Tuesday the 24th of May, I boldly repaired to Johnson. His Chambers were on the first floor of No. 1, Inner-Temple-lane, and I entered them with an impression given

me by the Reverend Dr [Hugh] Blair, of Edinburgh, who had been introduced to him not long before, and described his having 'found the Giant in his den,' an expression, which, when I came to be pretty well acquainted with Johnson, I repeated to him, and he was diverted at this picturesque account of himself.

He received me very courteously; but, it must be confessed, that his apartment, and furniture, and morning dress, were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of cloaths looked very rusty; he had on a little old shrivelled unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment that he began to talk. Some gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him; and when they went away, I also rose; but he said to me, 'Nay, don't go.' 'Sir, (said I,) I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you.' He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, 'Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me.' I have preserved the following short minute of what passed this day: -

'Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart shewed the disturbance of his mind, by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the street, or in any other unusual place. Now although, rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not pray, that their understanding is not called in question.'

Concerning this unfortunate poet, Christopher Smart, who was confined in a mad-house, he had, at another time, the following conversation with Dr [Charles] Burney: - BURN-
NEY. 'How does poor Smart do, Sir; is he likely to recover?'
JOHNSON. 'It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease; for he grows fat upon it.' BURN-
NEY. 'Perhaps, Sir, that may be from want of exercise.' JOHNSON.
'No, Sir; he has partly as much exercise as he used to have,

for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement, he used for exercise to walk to the ale-house; but he was *carried* back again. I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as any one else. Another charge was, that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it.' – Johnson continued. 'Mankind have a great aversion to intellectual labour; but even supposing knowledge to be easily attainable, more people would be content to be ignorant than would take even a little trouble to acquire it.'

Talking of Garrick, he said, 'He is the first man in the world for sprightly conversation.'

When I rose a second time he again pressed me to stay, which I did.

He told me, that he generally went abroad at four in the afternoon, and seldom came home till two in the morning. I took the liberty to ask him if he did not think it wrong to live thus, and not make more use of his great talents. He owned it was a bad habit. On reviewing, at the distance of many years, my journal of this period, I wonder how, at my first visit, I ventured to talk to him so freely, and that he bore it with so much indulgence.

Before we parted, he was so good as to promise to favour me with his company one evening at my lodgings; and, as I took my leave, shook me cordially by the hand. It is almost needless to add, that I felt no little elation at having now so happily established an acquaintance of which I had been so long ambitious.

I did not visit him again till Monday, June 13. He again shook me by the hand at parting, and asked me why I did not come oftener to him. Trusting that I was now in his good graces, I answered, that he had not given me much encouragement, and reminded him of the check I had received from him at our first interview. 'Poh, poh! (said he, with a complacent smile,) never mind these things. Come to me as often as you can. I shall be glad to see you.'

I had learnt that his place of frequent resort was the Mitre

tavern in Fleet-street, where he loved to sit up late, and I begged I might be allowed to pass an evening with him there soon, which he promised I should. A few days afterwards I met him near Temple-bar, about one o'clock in the morning, and asked if he would then go to the Mitre. 'Sir, (said he) it is too late; they won't let us in. But I'll go with you another night with all my heart.'

A revolution of some importance in my plan of life had just taken place; for instead of procuring a commission in the foot-guards, which was my own inclination, I had, in compliance with my father's wishes, agreed to study the law; and was soon to set out for Utrecht, and then to proceed on my travels. Though very desirous of obtaining Dr Johnson's advice and instructions on the mode of pursuing my studies, I was at this time so occupied, shall I call it? or so dissipated, by the amusements of London,¹ that our next meeting was not till Saturday, June 25, when happening to dine at Clifton's eating-house, in Butcher-row, I was surprized to perceive Johnson come in and take his seat at another table. The mode of dining, or rather being fed, at such houses in London, is well known to many to be particularly unsocial, as there is no Ordinary, or united company, but each person has his own mess, and is under no obligation to hold any intercourse with any one. A liberal and full-minded man, however, who loves to talk, will break through this churlish and unsocial restraint. Johnson and an Irish gentleman got into a dispute concerning the cause of some part of mankind being black. 'Why, Sir, (said Johnson,) it has been accounted for in three ways: either by supposing that they are the posterity of Ham, who was cursed; or that God at first created two kinds of men, one black and another white; or that by the heat of the sun the skin is scorched, and so acquires a sooty hue. This matter has been much canvassed among naturalists, but has never been brought to any certain issue.' What the Irishman said is totally obliterated from my mind; but I remember that he became very warm and intemperate in his expressions; upon which Johnson rose, and quietly walked away. When he had

retired, his antagonist took his revenge, as he thought, by saying, 'He has a most ungainly figure, and an affectation of pomposity, unworthy of a man of genius.'

Johnson had not observed that I was in the room. I followed him, however, and he agreed to meet me in the evening at the Mitre. I called on him, and we went thither at nine. We had a good supper, and port wine, of which he then sometimes drank a bottle. The orthodox high-church sound of the MITRE, — the figure and manner of the celebrated SAMUEL JOHNSON, — the extraordinary power and precision of his conversation, and the pride arising from finding myself admitted as his companion, produced a variety of sensations, and a pleasing elevation of mind beyond what I had ever before experienced.

Finding him in a placid humour, and wishing to avail myself of the opportunity which I fortunately had of consulting a sage, to hear whose wisdom, I conceived in the ardour of youthful imagination, that men filled with a noble enthusiasm for intellectual improvement would gladly have resorted from distant lands; — I opened my mind to him ingenuously, and gave him a little sketch of my life, to which he was pleased to listen with great attention.

I acknowledged, that though educated very strictly in the principles of religion, I had for some time been misled into a certain degree of infidelity; but that I was come now to a better way of thinking, and was fully satisfied of the truth of the Christian revelation, though I was not clear as to every point considered to be orthodox. Being at all times a curious examiner of the human mind, and pleased with an undisguised display of what had passed in it, he called to me with warmth, 'Give me your hand; I have taken a liking to you.' He then began to descant upon the force of testimony, and the little we could know of final causes; so that the objections of, why was it so? or why was it not so? ought not to disturb us: adding, that he himself had at one period been guilty of a temporary neglect of religion, but that it was not the result of argument, but mere absence of thought.

After having given credit to reports of his bigotry, I was

agreeably surprized when he expressed the following very liberal sentiment, which has the additional value of obviating an objection to our holy religion, founded upon the discordant tenets of Christians themselves: 'For my part, Sir, I think all Christians, whether Papists or Protestants, agree in the essential articles, and that their differences are trivial, and rather political than religious.'

Our conversation proceeded. 'Sir, (said he) I am a friend to subordination, as most conducive to the happiness of society. There is a reciprocal pleasure in governing and being governed.'

'Dr Goldsmith is one of the first men we now have as an authour, and he is a very worthy man too. He has been loose in his principles, but he is coming right.'

I mentioned [David] Mallet's tragedy of *Elvira*, which had been acted the preceding winter at Drury-lane, and that the Honourable Andrew Erskine, Mr [George] Dempster, and myself, had joined in writing a pamphlet, entitled, *Critical Strictures*, against it. That the mildness of Dempster's disposition had, however, relented; and he had candidly said, 'We have hardly a right to abuse this tragedy: for bad as it is, how vain should either of us be to write one not near so good.' JOHNSON. 'Why no, Sir; this is not just reasoning. You *may* abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables.'

He proceeded: 'Your going abroad, Sir, and breaking off idle habits, may be of great importance to you. I would go where there are courts and learned men. There is a good deal of Spain that has not been perambulated. I would have you go thither. A man of inferiour talents to yours may furnish us with useful observations upon that country.' His supposing me, at that period of life, capable of writing an account of my travels that would deserve to be read, elated me not a little.

I appeal to every impartial reader whether this faithful detail of his frankness, complacency, and kindness to a young

man, a stranger and a Scotchman, does not refute the unjust opinion of the harshness of his general demeanour. His occasional reproofs of folly, impudence, or impiety, and even the sudden sallies of his constitutional irritability of temper, which have been preserved for the poignancy of their wit, have produced that opinion among those who have not considered that such instances, were, in fact, scattered through a long series of years; years, in which his time was chiefly spent in instructing and delighting mankind by his writings and conversation, in acts of piety to God, and good-will to men.

I complained to him that I had not yet acquired much knowledge, and asked his advice as to my studies. He said, 'Don't talk of study now. I will give you a plan; but it will require some time to consider of it.' 'It is very good of you (I replied,) to allow me to be with you thus. Had it been foretold to me some years ago that I should pass an evening with the authour of *The Rambler*, how should I have exulted!' What I then expressed, was sincerely from the heart. He was satisfied that it was, and cordially answered, 'Sir, I am glad we have met. I hope we shall pass many evenings and mornings too, together.' We finished a couple of bottles of port, and sat still between one and two in the morning.

*

As Dr Oliver Goldsmith will frequently appear in this narrative, I shall endeavour to make my readers in some degree acquainted with his singular character. He was a native of Ireland, and a contemporary with Mr Burke at Trinity College, Dublin, but did not then give much promise of future celebrity. He, however, observed to Mr [Edmond] Malone, that 'though he made no great figure in mathematicks, which was a study in much repute there, he could turn an Ode of Horace into English better than any of them.' He afterwards studied physick at Edinburgh, and upon the Continent; and I have been informed, was enabled to pursue his travels on foot, partly by demanding at Universities to enter the list as a disputant, by which, according to the custom of many of them, he was entitled to the premium of a crown, when

luckily for him his challenge was not accepted; so that, as I once observed to Dr Johnson, he *disputed* his passage through Europe. He then came to England, and was employed successively in the capacities of an usher to an academy, a corrector of the press, a reviewer, and a writer for a news-paper. He had sagacity enough to cultivate assiduously the acquaintance of Johnson, and his faculties were gradually enlarged by the contemplation of such a model. To me and many others it appeared that he studiously copied the manner of Johnson, though, indeed, upon a smaller scale.

It has been generally circulated and believed that he was a mere fool in conversation; but, in truth, that has been greatly exaggerated. He had, no doubt, a more than common share of that hurry of ideas which we often find in his countrymen, and which sometimes produces a laughable confusion in expressing them. He was very much what the French call *un étourdi*, and from vanity and an eager desire of being conspicuous wherever he was, he frequently talked carelessly without knowledge of the subject, or even without thought. His person was short, his countenance coarse and vulgar, his deportment that of a scholar awkwardly affecting the easy gentleman. Those who were in any way distinguished, excited envy in him to so ridiculous an excess, that the instances of it are hardly credible. When accompanying two beautiful young ladies [the Misses Catherine and Mary Horneck] with their mother on a tour of France, he was seriously angry that more attention was paid to them than to him; and once at the exhibition of the *Fantoccini* in London, when those who sat next to him observed with what dexterity a puppet was made to toss a pike, he could not bear that it should have such praise, and exclaimed with some warmth, 'Pshaw! I can do it better myself.'²

He, I am afraid, had no settled system of any sort, so that his conduct must not be strictly scrutinised; but his affections were social and generous, and when he had money he gave it away very liberally. His desire of imaginary consequence predominated over his attention to truth. When he began to rise into notice, he said he had a brother who was Dean of

Durham, a fiction so easily detected, that it is wonderful how he should have been so inconsiderate as to hazard it. He boasted to me at this time of the power of his pen in commanding money, which I believe was true in a certain degree, though in the instance he gave he was by no means correct. He told me that he had sold a novel for four hundred pounds. This was his *Vicar of Wakefield*. But Johnson informed me, that he had made the bargain for Goldsmith, and the price was sixty pounds.

My next meeting with Johnson was on Friday the 1st of July, when he and I and Dr Goldsmith supped together at the Mitre. I was before this time pretty well acquainted with Goldsmith, who was one of the brightest ornaments of the Johnsonian school. Goldsmith's respectful attachment to Johnson was then at its height; for his own literary reputation had not yet distinguished him so much as to excite a vain desire of competition with his great Master. He had increased my admiration of the goodness of Johnson's heart, by incidental remarks in the course of conversation, such as, when I mentioned Mr [Robert] Levet, whom he entertained under his roof, 'He is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough to Johnson;' and when I wondered that he was very kind to a man of whom I had heard a very bad character, 'He is now become miserable, and that insures the protection of Johnson.'

Dr John Campbell, the celebrated political and biographical writer, being mentioned, Johnson said, 'Campbell is a man of much knowledge, and has a good share of imagination. Campbell is not always rigidly careful of truth in his conversation; but I do not believe there is any thing of this carelessness in his books. Campbell is a good man, a pious man. I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a church for many years, but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat. This shews that he has good principles. I used to go pretty often to Campbell's on a Sunday evening till I began to consider that the shoals of Scotchmen who flocked about him might probably say, when any thing of mine was well done, "Ay, ay, he has learnt this of CAWMELL!"'

He talked very contemptuously of [Charles] Churchill's poetry, observing, that 'it had a temporary currency, only from its audacity of abuse, and being filled with living names, and that it would sink into oblivion.' I ventured to hint that he was not quite a fair judge, as Churchill had attacked him violently. JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, I am a very fair judge. He did not attack me violently till he found I did not like his poetry; and his attack on me shall not prevent me from continuing to say what I think of him, from an apprehension that it may be ascribed to resentment. No, Sir, I called the fellow a blockhead at first, and I will call him a blockhead still. However, I will acknowledge that I have a better opinion of him now, than I once had; for he has shewn more fertility than I expected. To be sure, he is a tree that cannot produce good fruit: he only bears crabs. But, Sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few.'

At this time *Miss Williams*, as she was then called, though she did not reside with him in the Temple under his roof, but had lodgings in Bolt-court, Fleet-street, had so much of his attention, that he every night drank tea with her before he went home, however late it might be, and she always sat up for him. This, it may be fairly conjectured, was not alone a proof of his regard for *her*, but of his own unwillingness to go into solitude, before that unseasonable hour at which he had habituated himself to expect the oblivion of repose. Dr Goldsmith, being a privileged man, went with him this night, strutting away, and calling to me with an air of superiority, like that of an esoterick over an exoterick disciple of a sage of antiquity, 'I go to Miss Williams.' I confess, I then envied him this mighty privilege, of which he seemed so proud; but it was not long before I obtained the same mark of distinction.

On Wednesday, July 6, he was engaged to sup with me at my lodgings in Downing-street, Westminster. But on the preceding night my landlord having behaved very rudely to me and some company who were with me, I had resolved not to remain another night in his house. I was exceedingly uneasy

at the awkward appearance I supposed I should make to Johnson and the other gentlemen whom I had invited, not being able to receive them at home, and being obliged to order supper at the Mitre. I went to Johnson in the morning, and talked of it as a serious distress. He laughed, and said, 'Consider, Sir, how insignificant this will appear a twelvemonth hence.' 'There is nothing in this mighty misfortune; nay, we shall be better at the Mitre.'

I had as my guests this evening at the Mitre tavern, Dr Johnson, Dr Goldsmith, Mr Thomas Davies, Mr Eccles, an Irish gentleman, for whose agreeable company I was obliged to Mr Davies, and the Reverend Mr John Ogilvie,³ who was desirous of being in company with my illustrious friend, while I, in my turn, was proud to have the honour of shewing one of my countrymen upon what easy terms Johnson permitted me to live with him.

Mr Ogilvie was unlucky enough to choose for the topick of his conversation the praises of his native country. He began with saying, that there was very rich land round Edinburgh. Goldsmith, who had studied physick there, contradicted this, very untruly, with a sneering laugh. Disconcerted a little by this, Mr Ogilvie then took new ground, where, I suppose, he thought himself perfectly safe; for he observed, that Scotland had a great many noble wild prospects. JOHNSON. 'I believe, Sir, you have a great many. Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, Sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!' This unexpected and pointed sally produced a roar of applause.

On the 14th we had another evening by ourselves at the Mitre. It happening to be a very rainy night, I made some common-place observations on the relaxation of nerves and depression of spirits which such weather occasioned; adding, however, that it was good for the vegetable creation. Johnson, who, as we have already seen, denied that the temperature of the air had any influence on the human frame, answered, with a smile of ridicule, 'Why yes, Sir, it is good

for vegetables, and for the animals who eat those vegetables, and for the animals who eat those animals.' This observation of his aptly enough introduced a good supper; and I soon forgot, in Johnson's company, the influence of a moist atmosphere.

Feeling myself now quite at ease as his companion, though I had all possible reverence for him, I expressed a regret that I could not be so easy with my father, though he was not much older than Johnson, and certainly however respectable had not more learning and greater abilities to depress me. I asked him the reason of this. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, I am a man of the world. I live in the world, and I take, in some degree, the colour of the world as it moves along. Your father is a Judge in a remote part of the island, and all his notions are taken from the old world. Besides, Sir, there must always be a struggle between a father and son, while one aims at power and the other at independence.' I said, I was afraid my father would force me to be a lawyer. JOHNSON. 'Sir, you need not be afraid of his forcing you to be a laborious practising lawyer; that is not in his power. For as the proverb says, "One man may lead a horse to the water, but twenty cannot make him drink." He may be displeased that you are not what he wishes you to be; but that displeasure will not go far. If he insists on your having as much law as is necessary for a man of property, and then endeavours to get you into Parliament, he is quite in the right.'

He enlarged very convincingly upon the excellence of rhyme over blank verse in English poetry. I mentioned to him that Dr Adam Smith, in his lectures upon composition, when I studied under him in the College of Glasgow, had maintained the same opinion strenuously, and I repeated some of his arguments. JOHNSON. 'Sir, I was once in company with Smith, and we did not take to each other; but had I known that he loved rhyme as much as you tell me he does, I should have HUGGED him.'

Talking of those who denied the truth of Christianity, he said, 'It is always easy to be on the negative side. If a man were now to deny that there is salt upon the table, you could

not reduce him to an absurdity. Come, let us try this a little further. I deny that Canada is taken, and I can support my denial by pretty good arguments. The French are a much more numerous people than we; and it is not likely that they would allow us to take it. "But the ministry have assured us, in all the formality of *The Gazette*, that it is taken." – Very true. But the ministry have put us to an enormous expence by the war in America, and it is their interest to persuade us that we have got something for our money. – "But the fact is confirmed by thousands of men who were at the taking of it." – Ay, but these men have still more interest in deceiving us. They don't want that you should think the French have beat them, but that they have beat the French. Now suppose you should go over and find that it is really taken, that would only satisfy yourself; for when you come home we will not believe you. We will say, you have been bribed. – Yet, Sir, notwithstanding all these plausible objections, we have no doubt that Canada is really ours. Such is the weight of common testimony. How much stronger are the evidences of the Christian religion !

'Idleness is a disease which must be combated; but I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good. A young man should read five hours in a day, and so may acquire a great deal of knowledge.'

To such a degree of unrestrained frankness had he now accustomed me, that in the course of this evening I talked of the numerous reflections which had been thrown out against him on account of his having accepted a pension from his present Majesty. 'Why, Sir, (said he, with a hearty laugh,) it is a mighty foolish noise that they make. I have accepted a pension as a reward which has been thought due to my literary merit; and now that I have this pension, I am the same man in every respect that I have ever been; I retain the same principles. It is true, that I cannot now curse (smiling) the House of Hanover; nor would it be decent for me to

drink King James's health in the wine that King George gives me money to pay for. But, Sir, I think that the pleasure of cursing the House of Hanover, and drinking King James's health, are amply overbalanced by three hundred pounds a year.'

There was here, most certainly, an affectation of more Jacobitism than he really had; and indeed an intention of admitting, for the moment, in a much greater extent than it really existed, the charge of disaffection imputed to him by the world, merely for the purpose of shewing how dexterously he could repel an attack, even though he were placed in the most disadvantageous position; for I have heard him declare, that if holding up his right hand would have secured victory at Culloden to Prince Charles's army, he was not sure he would have held it up; so little confidence had he in the right claimed by the house of Stuart, and so fearful was he of the consequences of another revolution on the throne of Great-Britain; and Mr Topham Beauclerk assured me, he had heard him say this before he had his pension.

Yet there is no doubt that at earlier periods he was wont often to exercise both his pleasantry and ingenuity in talking Jacobitism. My much respected friend, Dr [John] Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, has favoured me with the following admirable instance from his Lordship's own recollection. One day when dining at old Mr [Bennet] Langton's, where Miss Roberts, his niece, was one of the company, Johnson, with his usual complacent attention to the fair sex, took her by the hand and said, 'My dear, I hope you are a Jacobite.' Old Mr Langton, who, though a high and steady Tory, was attached to the present Royal Family, seemed offended, and asked Johnson, with great warmth, what he could mean by putting such a question to his niece? 'Why, Sir, (said Johnson) I meant no offence to your niece, I meant her a great compliment. A Jacobite, Sir, believes in the divine right of Kings. He that believes in the divine right of Kings believes in a Divinity. A Jacobite believes in the divine right of Bishops. He that believes in the divine right of Bishops believes in the divine authority of the Christian religion. There-

fore, Sir, a Jacobite is neither an Atheist nor a Deist. That cannot be said of a Whig; for *Whiggism is a negation of all principle.*'

I described to him an impudent fellow from Scotland [James Macpherson],⁴ who affected to be a savage, and railed at all established systems. JOHNSON. 'There is nothing surprizing in this, Sir. He wants to make himself conspicuous. He would tumble in a hogstye, as long as you looked at him and called to him to come out. But let him alone, never mind him, and he'll soon give it over.'

I added, that the same person maintained that there was no distinction between virtue and vice. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, if the fellow does not think as he speaks, he is lying; and I see not what honour he can propose to himself from having the character of a lyar. But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, Sir, when he leaves our houses, let us count our spoons.'

Next morning Mr Dempster happened to call on me, and was so much struck even with the imperfect account which I gave him of Dr Johnson's conversation, that to his honour be it recorded, when I complained that drinking port and sitting up late with him affected my nerves for some time after, he said, 'One had better be palsied at eighteen, than not keep company with such a man.'

On Tuesday, July 19, Mr Levet shewed me Dr Johnson's library, which was contained in two garrets over his Chambers, where Lintot, son of the celebrated bookseller of that name, had formerly his warehouse. I found a number of good books, but very dusty and in great confusion. The floor was strewn with manuscript leaves, in Johnson's own handwriting, which I beheld with a degree of veneration, supposing they perhaps might contain portions of *The Rambler* or of *Rasselas*. I observed an apparatus for chymical experiments, of which Johnson was all his life very fond. The place seemed to be very favourable for retirement and meditation. Johnson told me, that he went up thither without mentioning it to his servant, when he wanted to study, secure from interruption; for he would not allow his servant to say he was not at home

when he really was. 'A servant's strict regard for truth, (said he) must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know that it is merely a form of denial; but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to tell a lie for *me*, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for *himself*?'

On Wednesday, July 20, Dr Johnson, Mr Dempster, and my uncle Dr [John] Boswell, who happened to be now in London, supped with me. JOHNSON. 'Pity is not natural to man. Children are always cruel. Savages are always cruel. Pity is acquired and improved by the cultivation of reason. We may have uneasy sensations from seeing a creature in distress, without pity; for we have not pity unless we wish to relieve them. When I am on my way to dine with a friend, and finding it late, have bid the coachman make haste, if I happen to attend when he whips his horses, I may feel unpleasantly that the animals are put to pain, but I do not wish him to desist. No, Sir, I wish him to drive on.'

Mr Dempster having endeavoured to maintain that intrinsic merit *ought* to make the only distinction amongst mankind. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, mankind have found that this cannot be. How shall we determine the proportion of intrinsic merit? Were that to be the only distinction amongst mankind, we should soon quarrel about the degrees of it. Were all distinctions abolished, the strongest would not long acquiesce, but would endeavour to obtain a superiority by their bodily strength. But, Sir, as subordination is very necessary for society, and contentions for superiority very dangerous, mankind, that is to say, all civilized nations, have settled it upon a plain invariable principle. A man is born to hereditary rank; or his being appointed to certain offices, gives him a certain rank. Subordination tends greatly to human happiness. Were we all upon an equality, we should have no other enjoyment than mere animal pleasure.'

I said, I considered distinction of rank to be of so much importance in civilized society, that if I were asked on the same day to dine with the first Duke in England, and with the first man in Britain for genius, I should hesitate which

to prefer. JOHNSON. "To be sure, Sir, if you were to dine only once, and it were never to be known where you dined, you would choose rather to dine with the first man for genius; but to gain most respect, you should dine with the first Duke in England. For nine people in ten that you meet with, would have a higher opinion of you for having dined with a Duke; and the great genius himself would receive you better, because you had been with the great Duke."

At night Mr Johnson and I supped in a private room at the Turk's Head coffee-house, in the Strand. "I encourage this house (said he;) for the mistress of it is a good civil woman, and has not much business."

"Sir, I love the acquaintance of young people; because, in the first place, I don't like to think myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longest, if they do last; and then, Sir, young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect. I love the young dogs of this age: they have more wit and humour and knowledge of life than we had; but then the dogs are not so good scholars. Sir, in my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now. My judgement, to be sure, was not so good; but I had all the facts. I remember very well, when I was at Oxford, an old gentleman said to me, "Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task."

He mentioned to me now, for the first time, that he had been distressed by melancholy, and for that reason had been obliged to fly from study and meditation, to the dissipating variety of life. Against melancholy he recommended constant occupation of mind, a great deal of exercise, moderation in eating and drinking, and especially to shun drinking at night. He said melancholy people were apt to fly to intemperance for relief, but that it sunk them much deeper in misery. He observed, that labouring men who work hard, and live sparingly, are seldom or never troubled with low spirits.

He again insisted on the duty of maintaining subordination of rank. 'Sir, I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect, than of his money. I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them to do to me. I would behave to a nobleman as I should expect he would behave to me, were I a nobleman and he Sam Johnson. Sir, there is one Mrs Macaulay [Catharine Macaulay] in this town, a great republican. One day when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, "Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, Madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman; I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us." I thus, Sir, shewed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since. Sir, your levellers wish to level *down* as far as themselves; but they cannot bear levelling *up* to themselves. They would all have some people under them; why not then have some people above them?'

I spoke of Sir James Macdonald as a young man of most distinguished merit, who united the highest reputation at Eton and Oxford, with the patriarchal spirit of a great Highland Chieftain. I mentioned that Sir James had said to me, that he had never seen Mr Johnson, but he had a great respect for him, though at the same time it was mixed with some degree of terror. JOHNSON. 'Sir, if he were to be acquainted with me, it might lessen both.'

The mention of this gentleman led us to talk of the Western Islands of Scotland, to visit which he expressed a wish that then appeared to me a very romantick fancy, which I little thought would be afterwards realized. He said he would go to the Hebrides with me, when I returned from my travels, unless some very good companion should offer when I was absent, which he did not think probable; adding, 'There are few people to whom I take so much to as you.' And when I talked of my leaving England, he said, with a very affec-

tionate air, 'My dear Boswell, I should be very unhappy at parting, did I think we were not to meet again.'

We talked of the education of children; and I asked him what he thought was best to teach them first. JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the mean time your breech is bare. Sir, while you are considering which of two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learnt them both.'

On Thursday, July 28, we again supped in private at the Turk's Head coffee-house. JOHNSON. 'Swift has a higher reputation than he deserves. His excellence is strong sense; for his humour, though very well, is not remarkably good. I doubt whether *The Tale of a Tub* be his; for he never owned it, and it is much above his usual manner.'

He laughed heartily, when I mentioned to him a saying of his concerning Mr Thomas Sheridan, which [Samuel] Foote took a wicked pleasure to circulate. 'Why, Sir, Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity, Sir, is not in Nature.' 'So (said he,) I allowed him all his own merit.'

He now added, 'Sheridan cannot bear me. I bring his declamation to a point. I ask him a plain question, "What do you mean to teach?" Besides, Sir, what influence can Mr Sheridan have upon the language of this great country, by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover, to shew light at Calais.'

I again begged his advice as to my method of study at Utrecht. 'Come, (said he) let us make a day of it. Let us go down to Greenwich and dine, and talk of it there.' The following Saturday was fixed for this excursion.

As we walked along the Strand to-night, arm in arm, a woman of the town accosted us, in the usual enticing manner. 'No, no, my girl, (said Johnson) it won't do.' He, however, did not treat her with harshness, and we talked of the wretched life of such women; and agreed, that much more

misery than happiness, upon the whole, is produced by illicit commerce between the sexes.

On Saturday, July 30, Dr Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education. JOHNSON. 'Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it.' 'And yet, (said I) people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors.' He then called to the boy, 'What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?' 'Sir, (said the boy,) I would give what I have.' Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare. Dr Johnson then turning to me, 'Sir, (said he) a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being, whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge.'

We landed at the Old Swan, and walked to Billingsgate, where we took oars, and moved smoothly along the silver Thames. It was a very fine day. We were entertained with the immense number and variety of ships that were lying at anchor, and with the beautiful country on each side of the river.

We walked in the evening in Greenwich Park. He asked me, I suppose, by way of trying my disposition, 'Is not this very fine?' Having no exquisite relish of the beauties of Nature, and being more delighted with 'the busy hum of men,' I answered, 'Yes, Sir; but not equal to Fleet-street.' JOHNSON. 'You are right, Sir.'

We staid so long at Greenwich, that our sail up the river, in our return to London, was by no means so pleasant as in

the morning; for the night air was so cold that it made me shiver. I was the more sensible of it from having sat up all the night before, recollecting and writing in my journal what I thought worthy of preservation; an exertion, which, during the first part of my acquaintance with Johnson, I frequently made. I remember having sat up four nights in one week, without being much incommoded in the day time.

Johnson, whose robust frame was not in the least affected by the cold, scolded me, as if my shivering had been a paltry effeminacy, saying, 'Why do you shiver?' Sir William Scott, of the Commons, told me, that when he complained of a head-ache in the post-chaise, as they were travelling together to Scotland, Johnson treated him in the same manner: 'At your age, Sir, I had no head-ache.'

We concluded the day at the Turk's Head coffee-house very socially. He was pleased to listen to a particular account which I gave him of my family, and of its hereditary estate, as to the extent and population of which he asked questions, and made calculations; recommending, at the same time, a liberal kindness to the tenantry, as people over whom the proprietor was placed by Providence. He took delight in hearing my description of the romantick seat of my ancestors. 'I must be there, Sir, (said he) and we will live in the old castle; and if there is not a room in it remaining, we will build one.' I was highly flattered, but could scarcely indulge a hope that Auchinleck would indeed be honoured by his presence, and celebrated by a description, as it afterwards was, in his *Journey to the Western Islands*.

After we had again talked of my setting out for Holland, he said, 'I must see thee out of England; I will accompany you to Harwich.' I could not find words to express what I felt upon this unexpected and very great mark of his affectionate regard.

Next day, Sunday, July 31, I told him I had been that morning at a meeting of the people called Quakers, where I had heard a woman preach. JOHNSON. 'Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprized to find it done at all.'

On Tuesday, August 2 (the day of my departure from London having been fixed for the 5th,) Dr Johnson did me the honour to pass a part of the morning with me at my Chambers. He said, that 'he always felt an inclination to do nothing.' I observed, that it was strange to think that the most indolent man in Britain had written the most laborious work, *The English Dictionary*.

I had now made good my title to be a privileged man, and was carried by him in the evening to drink tea with Miss Williams, whom, though under the misfortune of having lost her sight, I found to be agreeable in conversation; for she had a variety of literature, and expressed herself well; but her peculiar value was the intimacy in which she had long lived with Johnson, by which she was well acquainted with his habits, and knew how to lead him on to talk.

After tea he carried me to what he called his walk, which was a long narrow paved court in the neighbourhood, overshadowed by some trees. There we sauntered a considerable time; and I complained to him that my love of London and of his company was such, that I shrunk almost from the thought of going away, even to travel, which is generally so much desired by young men. He roused me by manly and spirited conversation. He advised me, when settled in any place abroad, to study with an eagerness after knowledge, and to apply to Greek an hour every day; and when I was moving about, to read diligently the great book of mankind.

On Wednesday, August 3, we had our last social evening at the Turk's Head coffee-house, before my setting out for foreign parts. I had the misfortune, before we parted, to irritate him unintentionally. I mentioned to him how common it was in the world to tell absurd stories of him, and to ascribe to him very strange sayings. JOHNSON. 'What do they make me say, Sir?' BOSWELL. 'Why, Sir, as an instance very strange indeed, (laughing heartily as I spoke,) David Hume told me, you said that you would stand before a battery of cannon, to restore the Convocation to its full powers.' Little did I apprehend that he had actually said this: but I was soon convinced of my error; for, with a de-

terminated look, he thundered out 'And would I not, Sir? Shall the Presbyterian *Kirk* of Scotland have its General Assembly, and the Church of England be denied its Convocation?' He was walking up and down the room while I told him the anecdote; but when he uttered this explosion of high-church zeal, he had come close to my chair, and his eyes flashed with indignation. I bowed to the storm, and diverted the force of it, by leading him to expatiate on the influence which religion derived from maintaining the church with great external respectability.⁵

On Friday, August 5, we set out early in the morning in the Harwich stage coach. A fat elderly gentlewoman, and a young Dutchman, seemed the most inclined among us to conversation. At the inn where we dined, the gentlewoman said that she had done her best to educate her children; and particularly, that she had never suffered them to be a moment idle. JOHNSON. 'I wish, madam, you would educate me too; for I have been an idle fellow all my life.' 'I am sure, Sir, (said she) you have not been idle.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Madam, it is very true; and that gentleman there (pointing to me,) has been idle. He was idle at Edinburgh. His father sent him to Glasgow, where he continued to be idle. He then came to London, where he has been very idle; and now he is going to Utrecht, where he will be as idle as ever.' I asked him privately how he could expose me so. JOHNSON. 'Poh, poh! (said he) they knew nothing about you, and will think of it no more.' In the afternoon the gentlewoman talked violently against the Roman Catholics, and of the horrors of the Inquisition. To the utter astonishment of all the passengers but myself, who knew that he could talk upon any side of a question, he defended the Inquisition, and maintained, that 'false doctrine should be checked on its first appearance; that the civil power should unite with the church in punishing those who dared to attack the established religion, and that such only were punished by the Inquisition.' He had in his pocket *Pomponius Mela de situ Orbis*, in which he read occasionally, and seemed very intent upon ancient geography. Though by no means niggardly, his attention to

what was generally right was so minute, that having observed at one of the stages that I ostentatiously gave a shilling to the coachman, when the custom was for each passenger to give only sixpence, he took me aside and scolded me, saying that what I had done would make the coachman dissatisfied with all the rest of the passengers, who gave him no more than his due. This was a just reprimand; for in whatever way a man may indulge his generosity or his vanity in spending his money, for the sake of others he ought not to raise the price of any article for which there is a constant demand.

Having stopped a night at Colchester, Johnson talked of that town with veneration, for having stood a siege for Charles the First. The Dutchman alone now remained with us. He spoke English tolerably well; and thinking to recommend himself to us by expatiating on the superiority of the criminal jurisprudence of this country over that of Holland, he inveighed against the barbarity of putting an accused person to the torture, in order to force a confession. But Johnson was as ready for this, as for the Inquisition. 'Why, Sir, you do not, I find, understand the law of your own country. The torture in Holland is considered as a favour to an accused person; for no man is put to the torture there, unless there is as much evidence against him as would amount to conviction in England. An accused person among you, therefore, has one chance more to escape punishment, than those who are tried among us.'

At supper this night he talked of good eating with uncommon satisfaction. 'Some people (said he,) have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously, and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else.' He now appeared to me *Jean Bull philosophe*, and he was, for the moment, not only serious but vehement. Yet I have heard him, upon other occasions, talk with great contempt of people who were anxious to gratify their palates; and the 206th number of his *Rambler* is a masterly essay against gulosity. His practice, indeed, I must acknowledge, may be considered as casting

the balance of his different opinions upon this subject; for I never knew any man who relished good eating more than he did. When at table, he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed rivetted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce, and indulged with such intenseness, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible. To those whose sensations were delicate, this could not but be disgusting; and it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command. But it must be owned, that Johnson, though he could be rigidly *abstemious*, was not a *temperate* man either in eating or drinking. He could refrain, but he could not use moderately. He told me, that he had fasted two days without inconvenience, and that he had never been hungry but once. They who beheld with wonder how much he eat upon all occasions when his dinner was to his taste, could not easily conceive what he must have meant by hunger; and not only was he remarkable for the extraordinary quantity which he eat, but he was, or affected to be, a man of very nice discernment in the science of cookery. He used to descant critically on the dishes which had been at table where he had dined or supped, and to recollect very minutely what he had liked. I remember, when he was in Scotland, his praising '*Gordon's palates*,' (a dish of palates at the Honourable Alexander Gordon's) with a warmth of expression which might have done honour to more important subjects. 'As for Maclaurin's [John Maclaurin, Lord Dreg-horn] imitation of a *made dish*, it was a wretched attempt.' He about the same time was so much displeased with the performances of a nobleman's [probably Lord Elbank] French cook, that he exclaimed with vehemence, 'I'd throw such a rascal into the river;' and he then proceeded to alarm a lady [no doubt Mrs Boswell] at whose house he was to sup, by the following manifesto of his skill: 'I, Madam, who live at a variety of good tables, am a much better judge of cookery,

than any person who has a very tolerable cook, but lives much at home; for his palate is gradually adapted to the taste of his cook; whereas, Madam, in trying by a wider range, I can more exquisitely judge.' When invited to dine, even with an intimate friend, he was not pleased if something better than a plain dinner was not prepared for him. I have heard him say on such an occasion, 'This was a good dinner enough, to be sure; but it was not a dinner to *ask* a man to.' On the other hand, he was wont to express, with great glee, his satisfaction when he had been entertained quite to his mind. One day when we had dined with his neighbour and landlord in Bolt-court, Mr [Edmund] Allen, the printer, whose old housekeeper had studied his taste in every thing, he pronounced this eulogy: 'Sir, we could not have had a better dinner had there been a *Synod of Cooks*.'

While we were left by ourselves, after the Dutchman had gone to bed, Dr Johnson talked of that studied behaviour which many have recommended and practised. He disapproved of it; and said, 'I never considered whether I should be a grave man, or a merry man, but just let inclination, for the time, have its course.'

He flattered me with some hopes that he would, in the course of the following summer, come over to Holland, and accompany me in a tour through the Netherlands.

I teized him with fanciful apprehensions of unhappiness. A moth having fluttered round the candle, and burnt itself, he laid hold of this little incident to admonish me; saying, with a sly look, and in a solemn but quiet tone, 'That creature has its own tormentor, and I believe its name was Boswell.'

Next day we got to Harwich to dinner; and my passage in the packet-boat to Helvoetsluys being secured, and my baggage put on board, we dined at our inn by ourselves. I happened to say it would be terrible if he should not find a speedy opportunity of returning to London, and be confined to so dull a place. JOHNSON. 'Don't, Sir, accustom yourself to use big words for little matters. It would *not* be terrible, though I *were* to be detained some time here.' The

practice of using words of disproportionate magnitude, is, no doubt, too frequent every where; but I think, most remarkable among the French, of which, all who have travelled in France must have been struck with innumerable instances.

We went and looked at the church, and having gone into it and walked up to the altar, Johnson, whose piety was constant and fervent, sent me to my knees, saying, 'Now that you are going to leave your native country, recommend yourself to the protection of your CREATOR and REDEEMER.'

After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, 'I refute it *thus*.'

My revered friend walked down with me to the beach, where we embraced and parted with tenderness, and engaged to correspond by letters. I said, 'I hope, Sir, you will not forget me in my absence.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, it is more likely you should forget me, than that I should forget you.' As the vessel put out to sea, I kept my eyes upon him for a considerable time, while he remained rolling his majestick frame in his usual manner: and at last I perceived him walk back into the town, and he disappeared.

PART IV

1764-70

whom he says, 'he trusted that the least intimation of a desire to come among us, would procure him a ready admission; but in this he was mistaken. Johnson consulted me upon it; and when I could find no objection to receiving him, exclaimed, – "He will disturb us by his buffoonery;" – and afterwards so managed matters that he was never formally proposed, and, by consequence, never admitted.'

In justice both to Mr Garrick and Dr Johnson, I think it necessary to rectify this mis-statement. The truth is, that not very long after the institution of our club, Sir Joshua Reynolds was speaking of it to Garrick. 'I like it much, (said he,) I think I shall be of you.' When Sir Joshua mentioned this to Dr Johnson, he was much displeased with the actor's conceit. '*He'll be of us*, (said Johnson) how does he know we will *permit* him? The first Duke in England has no right to hold such language.' However, when Garrick was regularly proposed some time afterwards, Johnson, though he had taken a momentary offence at his arrogance, warmly and kindly supported him, and he was accordingly elected, was a most agreeable member, and continued to attend our meetings to the time of his death.

The ease and independence to which he had at last attained by royal munificence, increased [Johnson's] natural indolence. In his *Meditations* he thus accuses himself: – 'GOOD FRIDAY, April 20, 1764. – I have made no reformation; I have lived totally useless, more sensual in thought, and more addicted to wine and meat.' And next morning he thus feelingly complains: – 'My indolence, since my last reception of the sacrament, has sunk into grosser sluggishness, and my dissipation spread into wilder negligence. My thoughts have been clouded with sensuality; and, except that from the beginning of this year I have, in some measure, forborne excess of strong drink, my appetites have predominated over my reason. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year; and perceive that incidents and intelligence pass over me, without leaving any impression.' He then solemnly says,

'This is not the life to which heaven is promised;' and he earnestly resolves on amendment.

It was his custom to observe certain days with a pious abstraction; viz. New-year's-day, the day of his wife's death, Good Friday, Easter-day, and his own birth-day. He this year says: - 'I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving; having, from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing, therefore, is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O GOD, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. Amen.'

About this time he was afflicted with a very severe return of the hypochondriack disorder, which was ever lurking about him. He was so ill, as, notwithstanding his remarkable love of company, to be entirely averse to society, the most fatal symptom of that malady. Dr [William] Adams told me, that, as an old friend, he was admitted to visit him, and that he found him in a deplorable state, sighing, groaning, talking to himself, and restlessly walking from room to room. He then used this emphatical expression of the misery which he felt: 'I would consent to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits.'

Talking to himself was one of his singularities ever since I knew him. I was certain that he was frequently uttering pious ejaculations. He had another peculiarity, of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. It appeared to me some superstitious habit, which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot, (I am not certain which,) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have

seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion.

That the most minute singularities which belonged to him, and made very observable parts of his appearance and manner, may not be omitted, it is requisite to mention, that while talking or even musing as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head to one side towards his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backwards and forwards, and rubbing his left knee in the same direction, with the palm of his hand. In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, or what is called chewing the cud, sometimes giving a half whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing quickly under his breath, *too, too, too* : all this accompanied sometimes with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile. Generally when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a Whale. This I supposed was a relief to his lungs; and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind.

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1765 : ÆTAT. 56.] – No man was more gratefully sensible of any kindness done to him than Johnson. There is a little circumstance in his diary this year, which shews him in a very amiable light.

'July 2 – I paid Mr Simpson ten guineas, which he had formerly lent me in my necessity and for which Tetty expressed her gratitude.'

'July 8. – I lent Mr Simpson ten guineas more.'

Here he had a pleasing opportunity of doing the same kindness to an old friend, which he had formerly received

from him. Indeed his liberality as to money was very remarkable. The next article in his diary is,

'July 16. - I received seventy-five pounds. Lent Mr Davis twenty-five.'

Trinity College, Dublin, at this time surprised Johnson with a spontaneous compliment of the highest academical honours, by creating him Doctor of Laws.

This year was distinguished by his being introduced into the family of Mr [Henry] Thrale, one of the most eminent brewers in England and Member of Parliament for the borough of Southwark.³

Mr Thrale had married Miss Hesther Lynch Salusbury, of good Welch extraction, a lady of lively talents, improved by education. That Johnson's introduction into Mr Thrale's family, which contributed so much to the happiness of his life, was owing to her desire for his conversation, is very probable and a general supposition : but it is not the truth. Mr [Arthur] Murphy, who was intimate with Mr Thrale, having spoken very highly of Dr Johnson, he was requested to make them acquainted. This being mentioned to Johnson, he accepted of an invitation to dinner at Thrale's, and was so much pleased with his reception, both by Mr and Mrs Thrale, and they so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house were more and more frequent, till at last he became one of the family, and an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house in Southwark, and in their villa at Streatham.

Johnson had a very sincere esteem for Mr Thrale, as a man of excellent principles, a good scholar, well skilled in trade, of a sound understanding, and of manners such as presented the character of a plain independent English 'Squire. As this family will frequently be mentioned in the course of the following pages, and as a false notion has prevailed that Mr Thrale was inferiour, and in some degree insignificant, compared with Mrs Thrale, it may be proper to give a true state of the case from the authority of Johnson himself, in his own words.

'I know no man, (said he,) who is more master of his wife

and family than Thrale. If he but holds up a finger, he is obeyed. It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant; but he has ten times her learning: he is a regular scholar; but her learning is that of a schoolboy in one of the lower forms.' My readers may naturally wish for some representation of the figures of this couple. Mr Thrale was tall, well proportioned, and stately. As for *Madam*, or *my Mistress*, by which epithets Johnson used to mention Mrs Thrale, she was short, plump, and brisk. She has herself given us a lively view of the idea which Johnson had of her person, on her appearing before him in a dark-coloured gown; 'You little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colours?' Mr Thrale gave his wife a liberal indulgence, both in the choice of their company, and in the mode of entertaining them. He understood and valued Johnson, without remission, from their first acquaintance to the day of his death. Mrs Thrale was enchanted with Johnson's conversation, for its own sake, and had also a very allowable vanity in appearing to be honoured with the attention of so celebrated a man.

Nothing could be more fortunate for Johnson than this connection. He had at Mr Thrale's all the comforts and even luxuries of life; his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened by association with an agreeable and well-ordered family. He was treated with the utmost respect, and even affection. The vivacity of Mrs Thrale's literary talk roused him to cheerfulness and exertion, even when they were alone. But this was not often the case; for he found here a constant succession of what gave him the highest enjoyment: the society of the learned, the witty, and the eminent in every way, who were assembled in numerous companies, called forth his wonderful powers, and gratified him with admiration, to which no man could be insensible.

In the October of this year he at length gave to the world his edition of *Shakspeare*, which, if it had no other merit but that of producing his Preface, in which the excellencies and defects of that immortal bard are displayed with a masterly

hand, the nation would have had no reason to complain. A blind indiscriminate admiration of Shakspeare had exposed the British nation to the ridicule of foreigners. Johnson, by candidly admitting the faults of his poet, had the more credit in bestowing on him deserved and indisputable praise; and doubtless none of all his panegyrists have done him half so much honour.

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I returned to London in February, and found Dr Johnson in a good house in Johnson's Court, Fleet-street, in which he had accommodated Miss Williams with an apartment on the ground floor, while Mr Levett occupied his post in the garret: his faithful Francis was still attending upon him. He received me with much kindness. The fragments of our conversation, which I have preserved, are these: I told him that Voltaire, in a conversation with me, had distinguished Pope and Dryden thus: - 'Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six; but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling: Pope's go at a steady even trot.' He said of Goldsmith's *Traveller*, which had been published in my absence, 'There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time.'

At night I supped with him at the Mitre tavern, that we might renew our social intimacy at the original place of meeting. But there was now a considerable difference in his way of living. Having had an illness, in which he was advised to leave off wine, he had, from that period, continued to abstain from it, and drank only water, or lemonade.

I talked of the mode adopted by some to rise in the world, by courting great men, and asked him whether he had ever submitted to it. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, I never was near enough to great men, to court them. You may be prudently attached to great men and yet independent. You are not to do what you think wrong; and, Sir, you are to calculate, and not pay too dear for what you get. You must not give a shilling's worth of court for six-pence worth of good. But if you

can get a shilling's worth of good for six-pence worth of court, you are a fool if you do not pay court.'

I having mentioned that I had passed some time with Rousseau in his wild retreat, and having quoted some remark made by Mr Wilkes, with whom I had spent many pleasant hours in Italy, Johnson said (sarcastically,) 'It seems, Sir, you have kept very good company abroad, Rousseau and Wilkes!' Thinking it enough to defend one at a time, I said nothing as to my gay friend, but answered with a smile, 'My dear Sir, you don't call Rousseau bad company. Do you really think *him* a bad man?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, if you are talking jestingly of this, I don't talk with you. If you mean to be serious, I think him one of the worst of men; a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. Three or four nations have expelled him; and it is a shame that he is protected in this country.' BOSWELL. 'I don't deny, Sir, but that his novel may, perhaps, do harm; but I cannot think his intention was bad.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, that will not do. We cannot prove any man's intention to be bad. You may shoot a man through the head, and say you intended to miss him; but the Judge will order you to be hanged. An alleged want of intention, when evil is committed, will not be allowed in a court of justice. Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.' BOSWELL. 'Sir, do you think him as bad a man as Voltaire?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them.'

Another evening Dr Goldsmith and I called on him, with the hope of prevailing on him to sup with us at the Mitre. We found him indisposed, and resolved not to go abroad. 'Come then, (said Goldsmith,) we will not go to the Mitre to-night, since we cannot have the big man with us.' Johnson then called for a bottle of port, of which Goldsmith and I partook, while our friend, now a water-drinker, sat by us. GOLDSMITH. 'I think, Mr Johnson, you don't go near the theatres now. You give yourself no more concern about

a new play, than if you had never had any thing to do with the stage.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, our tastes greatly alter. The lad does not care for the child's rattle, and the old man does not care for the young man's whore.' GOLDSMITH. 'Nay, Sir, but your Muse was not a whore.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I do not think she was. But as we advance in the journey of life, we drop some of the things which have pleased us; whether it be that we are fatigued and don't choose to carry so many things anyfarther, or that we find other things which we like better.' BOSWELL. 'But, Sir, why don't you give us something in some other way?' GOLDSMITH. 'Ay, Sir, we have a claim upon you.' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir, I am not obliged to do any more. No man is obliged to do as much as he can do. A man is to have part of his life to himself. If a soldier has fought a good many campaigns, he is not to be blamed if he retires to ease and tranquillity. A physician, who has practised long in a great city, may be excused if he retires to a small town, and takes less practice. Now, Sir, the good I can do by my conversation bears the same proportion to the good I can do by my writings, that the practice of a physician, retired to a small town, does to his practice in a great city.' BOSWELL. 'But I wonder, Sir, you have not more pleasure in writing than in not writing.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you *may* wonder.'

In February, 1767, there happened one of the most remarkable incidents of Johnson's life, which gratified his monarchical enthusiasm, and which he loved to relate with all its circumstances, when requested by his friends. This was his being honoured by a private conversation with his Majesty, in the library at the Queen's house. He had frequently visited those splendid rooms and noble collection of books,⁴ which he used to say was more numerous and curious than he supposed any person could have made in the time which the King had employed. Mr [Frederick Augusta] Barnard, the librarian, took care that he should have every accommodation that could contribute to his ease and convenience, while indulging his literary taste in that place; so that he had here a very agreeable resource at leisure hours.

His Majesty having been informed of his occasional visits, was pleased to signify a desire that he should be told when Dr Johnson came next to the library. Accordingly, the next time that Johnson did come, as soon as he was fairly engaged with a book, on which, while he sat by the fire, he seemed quite intent, Mr Barnard stole round to the apartment where the King was, and, in obedience to his Majesty's commands, mentioned that Dr Johnson was then in the library. His Majesty said he was at leisure, and would go to him; upon which Mr Barnard took one of the candles that stood on the King's table, and lighted his Majesty through a suite of rooms, till they came to a private door into the library, of which his Majesty had the key. Being entered, Mr Barnard stepped forward hastily to Dr Johnson, who was still in a profound study, and whispered him, 'Sir, here is the King.' Johnson started up, and stood still. His Majesty approached him, and at once was courteously easy.

His Majesty began by observing, that he understood he came sometimes to the library; and then mentioning his having heard that the Doctor had been lately at Oxford, asked him if he was not fond of going thither. To which Johnson answered, that he was indeed fond of going to Oxford sometimes, but was likewise glad to come back again. His Majesty enquired if he was then writing any thing. He answered, he was not, for he had pretty well told the world what he knew, and must now read to acquire more knowledge. The King, as it should seem with a view to urge him to rely on his own stores as an original writer, and to continue his labours, then said, 'I do not think you borrow much from any body.' Johnson said, he thought he had already done his part as a writer. 'I should have thought so too, (said the King,) if you had not written so well.' – Johnson observed to me, upon this, that 'No man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a King to pay. It was decisive.' When asked by another friend, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, whether he made any reply to this high compliment, he answered, 'No, Sir. When the King had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me

to bandy civilities with my Sovereign.' Perhaps no man who had spent his whole life in courts could have shewn a more nice and dignified sense of true politeness, than Johnson did in this instance.

His Majesty having observed to him that he supposed he must have read a great deal; Johnson answered, that he thought more than he read; that he had read a great deal in the early part of his life, but having fallen into ill health, he had not been able to read much, compared with others : for instance, he said he had not read much, compared with Dr Warburton. Upon which the King said, that he heard Dr Warburton was a man of such general knowledge, that you could scarce talk with him on any subject on which he was not qualified to speak; and that his learning resembled Garrick's acting, in its universality.

His Majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr Johnson to undertake it. Johnson signified his readiness to comply with his Majesty's wishes.

During the whole of this interview, Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee and in the drawing-room. After the King withdrew, Johnson shewed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr Barnard, 'Sir, they may talk of the King as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen.' And he afterwards observed to Mr Langton, 'Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Lewis the Fourteenth or Charles the Second.'

At Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where a circle of Johnson's friends was collected round him to hear his account of this memorable conversation, Dr Joseph Warton, in his frank and lively manner, was very active in pressing him to mention the particulars. 'Come now, Sir, this is an interesting matter; do favour us with it.' Johnson, with great good humour, complied.

He told them, 'I found his Majesty wished I should talk, and I made it my business to talk. I find it does a man good to be talked to by his Sovereign.'

During all the time in which Dr Johnson was employed in relating to the circle at Sir Joshua Reynolds's the particulars of what passed between the King and him, Dr Goldsmith remained unmoved upon a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the least in the eager curiosity of the company. He assigned as a reason for his gloom and seeming inattention, that he apprehended Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a Prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered; but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honour Dr Johnson had lately enjoyed. At length, the frankness and simplicity of his natural character prevailed. He sprung from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, 'Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it.'

Johnson's diary affords no light as to his employment at this time. He passed three months at Lichfield; and I cannot omit an affecting and solemn scene there, as related by himself:—

'Sunday, Oct. 18, 1767. Yesterday, Oct. 17, at about ten in the morning, I took my leave for ever of my dear old friend, Catharine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She buried my father, my brother, and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old.'⁵

'I desired all to withdraw, then told her that we were to part for ever; that as Christians, we should part with prayer; and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me; and held up her poor hands, as she lay in bed, with great fervour, while I prayed, kneeling by her.

'I then kissed her. She told me, that to part was the greatest

pain that she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes, and great emotion of tenderness, the same hopes. We kissed, and parted. I humbly hope to meet again, and to part no more.'

By those who have been taught to look upon Johnson as a man of a harsh and stern character, let this tender and affectionate scene be candidly read; and let them then judge whether more warmth of heart, and grateful kindness, is often found in human nature.

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1768 : ÆTAT. 59.] — It appears from his notes of the state of his mind,¹ that he suffered great perturbation and distraction in 1768. Nothing of his writing was given to the publick this year, except the Prologue to his friend Goldsmith's comedy of *The Good-natured Man*. The first lines of this Prologue are strongly characteristical of the dismal gloom of his mind.

In the spring of this year, having published my *Account of Corsica*, with the *Journal of a Tour to that Island*, I returned to London, very desirous to see Dr Johnson, and hear him upon the subject. Having been told by somebody that he was offended at my having put into my Book an extract of his letter to me at Paris, I was impatient to be with him, and therefore followed him to Oxford, where I [found] that I had nothing to complain of but his being more indifferent to my anxiety than I wished him to be. Instead of giving, with the circumstances of time and place, such fragments of his conversation as I preserved during this visit to Oxford, I shall throw them together in continuation.

I asked him whether, as a moralist, he did not think that the practice of the law, in some degree, hurt the nice feeling of honesty. JOHNSON. 'Why no, Sir, if you act properly. You are not to deceive your clients with false representations of your opinion: you are not to tell lies to a judge.' BOSWELL. 'But, Sir, does not affecting a warmth when you have no warmth, and appearing to be clearly of one opinion when you are in reality of another opinion, does not such

dissimulation impair one's honesty? Is there not some danger that a lawyer may put on the same mask in common life, in the intercourse with his friends?" JOHNSON. "Why no, Sir. Everybody knows you are paid for affecting warmth for your client; and it is, therefore, properly no dissimulation: the moment you come from the bar you resume your usual behaviour. Sir, a man will no more carry the artifice of the bar into the common intercourse of society, than a man who is paid for tumbling upon his hands will continue to tumble upon his hands when he should walk on his feet."

Talking of some of the modern plays, he said *False Delicacy* was totally void of character. He praised Goldsmith's *Good-natured Man*; said, it was the best comedy that has appeared since *The Provoked Husband*. [He went on to say] 'I have not been troubled for a long time with authours desiring my opinion of their works. I used once to be sadly plagued with a man who wrote verses, but who literally had no other notion of a verse, but that it consisted of ten syllables. *Lay your knife and your fork, across your plate*, was to him a verse :

Lay yōr knife ānd your fōrk, acrōss your plāte.

As he wrote a great number of verses, he sometimes by chance made good ones, though he did not know it.'

He said he had lately been a long while at Lichfield, but had grown very weary before he left it. BOSWELL. 'I wonder at that, Sir; it is your native place.' JOHNSON. 'Why, so is Scotland *your* native place.'

His prejudice against Scotland appeared remarkably strong at this time. When I talked of our advancement in literature, 'Sir, (said he,) you have learnt a little from us, and you think yourselves very great men. Hume would never have written History, had not Voltaire written it before him. He is an echo of Voltaire.' BOSWELL. 'But, Sir, we have Lord Kames.' JOHNSON. 'You *have* Lord Kames. Keep him; ha, ha, ha! We don't envy you him. Do you ever see Dr [William] Robertson?' BOSWELL. 'Yes, Sir.' JOHNSON. 'Does the dog talk of me?' BOSWELL. 'Indeed, Sir, he does,

and loves you.' Thinking that I now had him in a corner, and being solicitous for the literary fame of my country, I pressed him for his opinion on the merit of Dr Robertson's *History of Scotland*. But, to my surprize, he escaped. — 'Sir, I love Robertson, and I won't talk of his book.'

An essay, written by Mr Deane [the Rev. Richard Deane], a divine of the Church of England, maintaining the future life of brutes, by an explication of certain parts of the scriptures, was mentioned, and the doctrine insisted on by a gentleman [Boswell himself] who seemed fond of curious speculation. Johnson, who did not like to hear of any thing concerning a future state which was not authorised by the regular canons of orthodoxy, discouraged this talk; and being offended at its continuation, he watched an opportunity to give the gentleman a blow of reprehension. So, when the poor speculatist, with a serious metaphysical pensive face, addressed him, 'But really, Sir, when we see a very sensible dog, we don't know what to think of him;' Johnson, rolling with joy at the thought which beamed in his eye, turned quickly round, and replied, 'True, Sir : and when we see a very foolish *fellow*, we don't know what to think of *him*.' He then rose up, strided to the fire, and stood for some time laughing and exulting.

He talked of the heinousness of the crime of adultery, by which the peace of families was destroyed. He said, 'Confusion of progeny constitutes the essence of the crime; and therefore a woman who breaks her marriage vows is much more criminal than a man who does it. A man, to be sure, is criminal in the sight of God : but he does not do his wife a very material injury, if he does not insult her; if, for instance, from mere wantonness of appetite, he steals privately to her chambermaid. Sir, a wife ought not greatly to resent this. I would not receive home a daughter who had run away from her husband on that account. A wife should study to reclaim her husband by more attention to please him. Sir, a man will not, once in a hundred instances, leave his wife and go to a harlot, if his wife has not been negligent of pleasing.'

At this time I observed upon the dial-plate of his watch a

short Greek inscription, taken from the New Testament, *Νοὺς ὑμῶν ἐρκεται*, being the first words of our SAVIOUR's solemn admonition to the improvement of that time which is allowed us to prepare for eternity: 'the night cometh, when no man can work.' He sometime afterwards laid aside this dial-plate; and when I asked him the reason, he said, 'It might do very well upon a clock which a man keeps in his closet; but to have it upon his watch which he carries about with him, and which is often looked at by others, might be censured as ostentatious.'

Upon his arrival in London in May, he surprized me one morning with a visit at my lodgings in Half-Moon-street, was quite satisfied with my explanation, and was in the kindest and most agreeable frame of mind. As he had objected to a part of one of his letters being published, I thought it right to take this opportunity of asking him explicitly whether it would be improper to publish his letters after his death. His answer was, 'Nay, Sir, when I am dead, you may do as you will.'

He talked in his usual style with a rough contempt of popular liberty. 'They make a rout about *universal* liberty, without considering that all that is to be valued, or indeed can be enjoyed by individuals, is *private* liberty. Political liberty is good only so far as it produces private liberty. Now, Sir, there is the liberty of the press, which you know is a constant topick. Suppose you and I and two hundred more were restrained from printing our thoughts: what then? What proportion would that restraint upon us bear to the private happiness of the nation?'

Soon afterwards, he supped at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in the Strand, with a company whom I collected to meet him. He was this evening in remarkable vigour of mind, and eager to exert himself in conversation, which he did with great readiness and fluency.

Swift having been mentioned, Johnson, as usual, treated him with little respect as an authour. Some of us endeavoured to support the Dean of St Patrick's by various arguments. One in particular praised his *Conduct of the Allies*. JOHN-

SON. 'Sir, his *Conduct of the Allies* is a performance of very little ability.' 'Surely, Sir, (said Dr [John] Douglas [Bishop of Salisbury],) you must allow it has strong facts.' JOHNSON. 'Why yes, Sir; but what is that to the merit of the composition? In the Sessions-paper of the Old Bailey there are strong facts. Housebreaking is a strong fact; robbery is a strong fact; and murder is a *mighty* strong fact; but is great praise due to the historian of those strong facts? No, Sir. Swift has told what he had to tell distinctly enough, but that is all. He had to count ten, and he has counted it right.'

When I called upon Dr Johnson next morning, I found him highly satisfied with his colloquial prowess the preceding evening. 'Well, (said he,) we had good talk.' BOSWELL. 'Yes, Sir; you tossed and gored several persons.'

The late Alexander, Earl of Eglintoune, had a great admiration of Johnson; but from the remarkable elegance of his own manners, was, perhaps, too delicately sensible of the roughness which sometimes appeared in Johnson's behaviour. He regretted that Johnson had not been educated with more refinement, and lived more in polished society. 'No, no, my Lord, (said Signor [Giuseppi] Baretti,) do with him what you would, he would always have been a bear.' 'True, (answered the Earl, with a smile,) but he would have been a *dancing* bear.'

To obviate all the reflections which have gone round the world to Johnson's prejudice, by applying to him the epithet of a *bear*, let me impress upon my readers a just and happy saying of my friend Goldsmith, who knew him well: 'Johnson, to be sure, has a roughness in his manner; but no man alive has a more tender heart. *He has nothing of the bear but his skin.*'

1769: ÆTAT. 60.] - In 1769, so far as I can discover, the publick was favoured with nothing of Johnson's composition, either for himself or any of his friends. His *Meditations* too strongly prove that he suffered much both in body and mind.

I came to London in the autumn, and having informed him that I was going to be married in a few months, I wished to have as much of his conversation as I could before en-

gaging in a state of life which would probably keep me more in Scotland, and prevent my seeing him so often as when I was a single man; but I found he was at Brighthelmstone with Mr and Mrs Thrale.

After his return to town, we met frequently, and I continued the practice of making notes of his conversation, though not with so much assiduity as I wish I had done. Such particulars of Johnson's conversation at this period as I have committed to writing, I shall here introduce, without any strict attention to methodical arrangement.

On the 30th of September we dined together at the Mitre. I attempted to argue for the superior happiness of the savage life, upon the usual fanciful topicks. JOHNSON. 'Sir, there can be nothing more false. The savages have no bodily advantages beyond those of civilised men. They have not better health; and as to care or mental uneasiness, they are not above it, but below it, like bears. No, Sir; you are not to talk such paradox: let me have no more on't. It cannot entertain, far less can it instruct. Lord Monboddo, one of your Scotch Judges, talked a great deal of such nonsense. I suffered *him*; but I will not suffer *you*.' – BOSWELL. 'But, Sir, does not Rousseau talk such nonsense?' JOHNSON. 'True, Sir; but Rousseau *knows* he is talking nonsense, and laughs at the world for staring at him.' BOSWELL. 'How so, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, a man who talks nonsense so well, must know that he is talking nonsense. But I am *afraid*, (chuckling and laughing,) Monboddo does *not* know that he is talking nonsense.'

Talking of a London life, he said, 'The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom.' BOSWELL. 'The only disadvantage is the great distance at which people live from one another.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; but that is occasioned by the largeness of it, which is the cause of all the other advantages.' BOSWELL. 'Sometimes I have been in the

humour of wishing to retire to a desert.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you have desert enough in Scotland.'

Although I had promised myself a great deal of instructive conversation with him on the conduct of the married state, of which I had then a near prospect, he did not say much upon that topick.

When I censured a gentleman of my acquaintance [Lord Auchincleck] for marrying a second time, as it shewed a disregard of his first wife, he said, 'Not at all, Sir. On the contrary, were he not to marry again, it might be concluded that his first wife had given him a disgust to marriage; but by taking a second wife he pays the highest compliment to the first, by shewing that she made him so happy as a married man, that he wishes to be so a second time.' And yet on another occasion, he owned that he once had almost asked a promise of Mrs Johnson that she would not marry again, but had checked himself. I presume that her having been married before had, at times, given him some uneasiness; for I remember his observing upon the marriage of one of our common friends [Bennet Langton], 'He has done a very foolish thing, Sir; he has married a widow, when he might have had a maid.'

We drank tea with Mrs Williams. I had last year the pleasure of seeing Mrs Thrale at Dr Johnson's one morning, and had conversation enough with her to admire her talents, and to shew her that I was as Johnsonian as herself. Dr Johnson had probably been kind enough to speak well of me, for this evening he delivered me a very polite card from Mr Thrale and her, inviting me to Streatham.

On the 6th of October I complied with this obliging invitation, and found, at an elegant villa, six miles from town, every circumstance that can make society pleasing. Johnson, though quite at home, was yet looked up to with an awe, tempered by affection, and seemed to be equally the care of his host and hostess. I rejoiced at seeing him so happy.

He played off his wit against Scotland with a good humoured pleasantry, which gave me, though no bigot to

national prejudices, an opportunity for a little contest with him. I having said that England was obliged to us for gardeners, almost all their good gardeners being Scotchmen. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that is because gardening is much more necessary amongst you than with us, which makes so many of your people learn it. It is *all* gardening with you. Things which grow wild here, must be cultivated with great care in Scotland. Pray now (throwing himself back in his chair, and laughing,) are you ever able to bring the *sloe* to perfection?'

I boasted that we had the honour of being the first to abolish the unhospitable, troublesome, and ungracious custom of giving vails to servants. JOHNSON. 'Sir, you abolished vails, because you were too poor to be able to give them.'

Mrs Thrale then praised Garrick's talent for light gay poetry; and, as a specimen, repeated his song in *Florizel and Perdita*, and dwelt with peculiar pleasure on this line :

'T'd smile with the simple, and feed with the poor.'

JOHNSON. 'Nay, my dear Lady, this will never do. Poor David ! Smile with the simple ! What folly is that ! And who would feed with the poor that can help it ? No, no ; let me smile with the wise, and feed with the rich.' I repeated this sally to Garrick, and wondered to find his sensibility as a writer not a little irritated by it.

He honoured me with his company at dinner on the 16th of October, at my lodgings in Old Bond-street, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr Garrick, Dr Goldsmith, Mr Murphy, Mr [Isaac] Bickerstaff [the dramatist], and Mr Thomas Davies. Garrick played round him with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, and, looking up in his face with a lively archness, complimented him on the good health which he seemed then to enjoy ; while the sage, shaking his head, beheld him with a gentle complacency. One of the company [possibly Reynolds] not being come at the appointed hour, I proposed, as usual upon such occasions, to order dinner to be served ; adding, 'Ought six people to be kept waiting for one ?' 'Why, yes, (answered Johnson, with a delicate hu-

manity,) if the one will suffer more by your sitting down, than the six will do by waiting.' Goldsmith, to divert the tedious minutes, strutted about, bragging of his dress, and I believe was seriously vain of it, for his mind was wonderfully prone to such impressions. 'Come, come, (said Garrick,) talk no more of that. You are, perhaps, the worst - eh, eh!' - Goldsmith was eagerly attempting to interrupt him, when Garrick went on, laughing ironically, 'Nay, you will always *look* like a gentleman; but I am talking of being well or ill *drest*.' 'Well, let me tell you, (said Goldsmith,) when my tailor brought home my bloom-coloured coat, he said, "Sir, I have a favour to beg of you. When any body asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, in Water-lane."' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that was because he knew the strange colour would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a colour.'

After dinner our conversation first turned upon Pope. Johnson said, his characters of men were admirably drawn, those of women not so well. He repeated to us, in his forcible melodious manner, the concluding lines of the *Dunciad*. While he was talking loudly in praise of those lines, one of the company [Boswell himself] ventured to say, 'Too fine for such a poem: - a poem on what?' JOHNSON. (with a disdainful look,) 'Why, on *dunces*. It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, Sir, hadst *thou* lived in those days! It is not worth while being a dunce now, when there are no wits.'

Mrs [Elizabeth] Montagu, a lady distinguished for having written an Essay on Shakspeare, being mentioned; REYNOLDS. 'I think that essay does her honour.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; it does *her* honour, but it would do nobody else honour. I have, indeed, not read it all. But when I take up the end of a web, and find it pack-thread, I do not expect, by looking further, to find embroidery. Sir, I will venture to say, there is not one sentence of true criticism in her book.' GARRICK. 'But, Sir, surely it shews how much Voltaire has mistaken Shakspeare, which nobody else has done.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, *nobody* else has thought it worth while. And what merit is there in

that? You may as well praise a schoolmaster for whipping a boy who has construed ill. No, Sir, there is no real criticism in it: none shewing the beauty of thought, as formed on the workings of the human heart.'

On Thursday, October 19, I passed the evening with him at his house. I complained that he had not mentioned Garrick in his Preface to Shakspeare; and asked him if he did not admire him. JOHNSON. 'Yes, as "a poor player, who frets and struts his hour upon the stage;" – as a shadow.' BOSWELL. 'But has he not brought Shakspeare into notice?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, to allow that, would be to lampoon the age. Many of Shakspeare's plays are the worse for being acted: *Macbeth*, for instance.' BOSWELL. 'What, Sir, is nothing gained by decoration and action? Indeed, I do wish that you had mentioned Garrick.' JOHNSON. 'My dear Sir, had I mentioned him, I must have mentioned many more: Mrs Pritchard, Mrs Cibber, – nay, and Mr Cibber too; he too altered Shakspeare.'

Talking of our feeling for the distress of others; – JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, there is much noise made about it, but it is greatly exaggerated. No, Sir, we have a certain degree of feeling to prompt us to do good: more than that, Providence does not intend. It would be misery to no purpose.' BOSWELL. 'But suppose now, Sir, that one of your intimate friends were apprehended for an offence for which he might be hanged.' JOHNSON. 'I should do what I could to bail him, and give him any other assistance; but if he were once fairly hanged, I should not suffer.' BOSWELL. 'Would you eat your dinner that day, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; and eat it as if he were eating it with me. Why, there's Baretti, who is to be tried for his life to-morrow, friends have risen up for him on every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plumb-pudding the less. Sir, that sympathetic feeling goes a very little way in depressing the mind.'⁶

I told him that I had dined lately at Foote's. BOSWELL. 'Pray, Sir, is not Foote an infidel?' JOHNSON. 'I do not know, Sir, that the fellow is an infidel; but if he be an in-

fidel, he is an infidel as a dog is an infidel; that is to say, he has never thought upon the subject.' BOSWELL. 'I suppose, Sir, he has thought superficially, and seized the first notions which occurred to his mind.' JOHNSON. 'Why then, Sir, still he is like a dog, that snatches the piece next him. Did you never observe that dogs have not the power of comparing? A dog will take a small bit of meat as readily as a large, when both are before him.'

We went home to his house to tea. Mrs Williams made it with sufficient dexterity, notwithstanding her blindness, though her manner of satisfying herself that the cups were full enough appeared to me a little awkward; for I fancied she put her finger down a certain way, till she felt the tea touch it.⁷ In my first elation at being allowed the privilege of attending Dr Johnson at his late visits to this lady, I willingly drank cup after cup, as if it had been the Heliconian spring. But as the charm of novelty went off, I grew more fastidious; and besides, I discovered that she was of a peevish temper.

There was a pretty large circle this evening. Dr Johnson was in very good humour, lively, and ready to talk upon all subjects. Mr [James] Fergusson, the self-taught philosopher, told him of a new-invented machine which went without horses: a man who sat in it turned a handle, which worked a spring that drove it forward. 'Then, Sir, (said Johnson,) what is gained is, the man has his choice whether he will move himself alone, or himself and the machine too.' [Bartholomew de] Dominicetti being mentioned, he would not allow him any merit. 'There is nothing in all this boasted system. No, Sir; medicated baths can be no better than warm water: their only effect can be that of tepid moisture.' One of the company [Boswell himself] took the other side, maintaining that medicines of various sorts, and some too of most powerful effect, are introduced into the human frame by the medium of the pores; and, therefore, when warm water is impregnated with salutiferous substances, it may produce great effects as a bath. This appeared to me very satisfactory. Johnson did not answer it; but talking for victory, and de-

terminated to be master of the field, he had recourse to the device which Goldsmith imputed to him in the witty words of one of Cibber's comedies: 'There is no arguing with Johnson; for when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it.' He turned to the gentleman, 'Well, Sir, go to Dominicetti, and get thyself fumigated; but be sure that the steam be directed to thy *head*, for *that* is the *peccant part*.' This produced a triumphant roar of laughter from the motley assembly.

The London Chronicle, which was the only news-paper he constantly took in, being brought, the office of reading it aloud was assigned to me. I was diverted by his impatience. He made me pass over so many parts of it, that my task was very easy. He would not suffer one of the petitions to the King about the Middlesex election to be read.

I had hired a Bohemian as my servant while I remained in London, and being much pleased with him, I asked Dr Johnson whether his being a Roman Catholick should prevent my taking him with me to Scotland. JOHNSON. 'Why no, Sir, if *he* has no objection, you can have none.' BOSWELL. 'So, Sir, you are no great enemy to the Roman Catholick religion.' JOHNSON. 'No more, Sir, than to the Presbyterian religion.' BOSWELL. 'You are joking.' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir, I really think so. Nay, Sir, of the two, I prefer the Popish.'

When we were alone, I introduced the subject of death, and endeavoured to maintain that the fear of it might be got over. I told him that David Hume said to me, he was no more uneasy to think he should *not be* after this life, than that he *had not been* before he began to exist. JOHNSON. 'Sir, if he really thinks so, his perceptions are disturbed; he is mad: if he does not think so, he lies. He may tell you, he holds his finger in the flame of a candle, without feeling pain; would you believe him? When he dies, he at least gives up all he has.' BOSWELL. 'Foote, Sir, told me, that when he was very ill he was not afraid to die.' JOHNSON. 'It is not true, Sir. Hold a pistol to Foote's breast, or to Hume's breast, and threaten to kill them, and you'll see how they behave.'

BOSWELL. 'But may we not fortify our minds for the approach of death?' Here I am sensible I was in the wrong, to bring before his view what he ever looked upon with horror; for although when in a celestial frame, in his 'Vanity of human Wishes', he has supposed death to be 'kind Nature's signal for retreat,' from this state of being to 'a happier seat,' his thoughts upon this awful change were in general full of dismal apprehensions. He answered, in a passion, 'No, Sir, let it alone. It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. The act of dying is not of importance, it lasts so short a time.' He added, (with an earnest look,) 'A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine.'

I attempted to continue the conversation. He was so provoked, that he said, 'Give us no more of this;' and was thrown into such a state of agitation, that he expressed himself in a way that alarmed and distressed me; shewed an impatience that I should leave him, and when I was going away, called to me sternly, 'Don't let us meet to-morrow.'

I went home exceedingly uneasy. All the harsh observations which I had ever heard made upon his character, crowded into my mind; and I seemed to myself like the man who had put his head into the lion's mouth a great many times with perfect safety, but at last had it bit off.

Next morning I sent him a note, stating, that I might have been in the wrong, but it was not intentionally; he was therefore, I could not help thinking, too severe upon me. That notwithstanding our agreement not to meet that day, I would call on him in my way to the city, and stay five minutes by my watch. 'You are, (said I,) in my mind, since last night, surrounded with cloud and storm. Let me have a glimpse of sunshine, and go about my affairs in serenity and cheerfulness.'

Upon entering his study, I was glad that he was not alone, which would have made our meeting more awkward. There were with him, Mr [George] Steevens⁸ and Mr [Thomas] Tyers,⁹ both of whom I now saw for the first time. My note had, on his own reflection, softened him, for he received me

very complacently; so that I unexpectedly found myself at ease, and joined in the conversation.

Johnson spoke unfavourably of a certain pretty voluminous authour, saying, 'He used to write anonymous books, and then other books commending those books, in which there was something of rascality.'

I whispered him, 'Well, Sir, you are now in good humour.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir.' I was going to leave him, and had got as far as the staircase. He stopped me, and smiling, said, 'Get you gone *in*;' a curious mode of inviting me to stay, which I accordingly did for some time longer.

This little incidental quarrel and reconciliation, which, perhaps, I may be thought to have detailed too minutely, must be esteemed as one of many proofs which his friends had, that though he might be charged with *bad humour* at times, he was always a *good-natured* man; and I have heard Sir Joshua Reynolds, a nice and delicate observer of manners, particularly remark, that when upon any occasion Johnson had been rough to any person in company, he took the first opportunity of reconciliation, by drinking to him, or addressing his discourse to him; but if he found his dignified indirect overtures sullenly neglected, he was quite indifferent, and considered himself as having done all that he ought to do, and the other as now in the wrong.

Being to set out for Scotland on the 10th of November, [I went] to him early on the morning of the tenth of November. Now (said he,) that you are going to marry, do not expect more from life, than life will afford. You may often find yourself out of humour, and you may often think your wife not studious enough to please you; and yet you may have reason to consider yourself as upon the whole very happily married.'

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1770: ÆTAT. 61.] — During this year there was a total cessation of all correspondence between Dr Johnson and me, without any coldness on either side, but merely from procrastination, continued from day to day; and as I was not in

London, I had no opportunity of enjoying his company and recording his conversation. To supply this blank, I shall present my readers with some *Collectanea*, obligingly furnished to me by the Rev. Dr [William] Maxwell, of Falkland, in Ireland, some time assistant preacher at the Temple, and for many years the social friend of Johnson, who spoke of him with a very kind regard.

‘His general mode of life, during my acquaintance, seemed to be pretty uniform. About twelve o’clock I commonly visited him, and frequently found him in bed, or declaiming over his tea, which he drank very plentifully. He generally had a levee of morning visitors, chiefly men of letters; Hawkesworth, Goldsmith, Murphy, Langton, Steevens, Beauclerk, &c. &c., and sometimes learned ladies, particularly I remember a French lady [Mme de Boufflers] of wit and fashion doing him the honour of a visit. He seemed to me to be considered as a kind of publick oracle, whom every body thought they had a right to visit and consult; and doubtless they were well rewarded. I never could discover how he found time for his compositions. He declaimed all the morning, then went to dinner at a tavern, where he commonly staid late, and then drank his tea at some friend’s house, over which he loitered a great while, but seldom took supper. I fancy he must have read and wrote chiefly in the night, for I can scarcely recollect that he ever refused going with me to a tavern, and he often went to Ranelagh, which he deemed a place of innocent recreation.

‘He frequently gave all the silver in his pocket to the poor, who watched him, between his house and the tavern where he dined. He walked the streets at all hours, and said he was never robbed, for the rogues knew he had little money, nor had the appearance of having much.¹⁰

‘Though the most accessible and communicative man alive, yet when he suspected he was invited to be exhibited, he constantly spurned the invitation.

‘Johnson was much attached to London : he observed, that a man stored his mind better there, than any where else; and that in remote situations a man’s body might be feasted, but

his mind was starved, and his faculties apt to degenerate, from want of exercise and competition. No place, (he said,) cured a man's vanity or arrogance so well as London; for as no man was either great or good *per se*, but as compared with others not so good or great, he was sure to find in the metropolis many his equals, and some his superiours. He told me, that he had frequently been offered country preferment, if he would consent to take orders; but he could not leave the improved society of the capital, or consent to exchange the exhilarating joys and splendid decorations of publick life, for the obscurity, insipidity, and uniformity of remote situations.

'Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, he said, was the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise.

'He had great compassion for the miseries and distresses of the Irish nation, particularly the Papists; and severely reprobated the barbarous debilitating policy of the British government, which, he said, was the most detestable mode of persecution. To a gentleman, who hinted such policy might be necessary to support the authority of the English government, he replied by saying, "Let the authority of the English government perish, rather than be maintained by iniquity. Better would it be to restrain the turbulence of the natives by the authority of the sword, and to make them amenable to law and justice by an effectual and vigorous police, than to grind them to powder by all manner of disabilities and incapacities. Better (said he,) to hang or drown people at once, than by an unrelenting persecution to beggar and starve them." The moderation and humanity of the present times have, in some measure, justified the wisdom of his observations.

'When exasperated by contradiction, he was apt to treat his opponents with too much acrimony: as, "Sir, you don't see your way through that question:" – "Sir, you talk the language of ignorance." On my observing to him that a certain gentleman had remained silent the whole evening, in the midst of a very brilliant and learned society, "Sir, (said he,) the conversation overflowed, and drowned him."

'He refused to go out of a room before me at Mr Langton's house, saying, he hoped he knew his rank better than to presume to take place of a Doctor in Divinity. I mention such little anecdotes, merely to shew the peculiar turn and habit of his mind.

'He used frequently to observe, that there was more to be endured than enjoyed, in the general condition of human life. For his part, he said, he never passed that week in his life which he would wish to repeat, were an angel to make the proposal to him.

'He was of opinion, that the English nation cultivated both their soil and their reason better than any other people : but admitted that the French, though not the highest, perhaps, in any department of literature, yet in every department were very high.

'Speaking of a dull tiresome fellow, whom he chanced to meet, he said, "That fellow seems to me to possess but one idea, and that is a wrong one."

'Much enquiry having been made concerning a gentleman, who had quitted a company where Johnson was, and no information being obtained; at last Johnson observed, that "he did not care to speak ill of any man behind his back, but he believed the gentleman was an *attorney*."

'A gentleman who had been very unhappy in marriage, married immediately after his wife died : Johnson said, it was the triumph of hope over experience.

'He observed, that a man of sense and education should meet a suitable companion in a wife. It was a miserable thing when the conversation could only be such as, whether the mutton should be boiled or roasted, and probably a dispute about that.

'He did not approve of late marriages, observing, that more was lost in point of time, than compensated for by any possible advantages. Even ill assorted marriages were preferable to cheerless celibacy.

'He observed, "it was a most mortifying reflexion for any man to consider, *what he had done*, compared with what *he might have done*."

'He said few people had intellectual resources sufficient to forego the pleasures of wine. They could not otherwise contrive how to fill the interval between dinner and supper.

'One evening at Mrs Montagu's, where a splendid company was assembled, consisting of the most eminent literary characters, I thought he seemed highly pleased with the respect and attention that were shewn him, and asked him on our return home if he was not highly *gratified* by his visit : "No, Sir, (said he,) not highly *gratified*; yet I do not recollect to have passed many evenings *with fewer objections*."

'Though of no high extraction himself, he had much respect for birth and family, especially among ladies. He said, "adventitious accomplishments may be possessed by all ranks; but one may easily distinguish the *born gentlewoman*."

'He said, "the poor in England were better provided for, than in any other country of the same extent."

'He advised me, if possible, to have a good orchard. He knew, he said, a clergyman of small income, who brought up a family very reputably which he chiefly fed with apple dumplings.'

PART V

1771-5

1771 : ÆTAT. 62.] – Mr [William] Strahan, the printer, who had been long in intimacy with Johnson, in the course of his literary labours, who was at once his friendly agent in receiving his pension for him, and his banker in supplying him with money when he wanted it; who was himself now a Member of Parliament, and who loved much to be employed in political negotiation; thought he should do eminent service both to government and Johnson, if he could be the means of his getting a seat in the House of Commons. With this view, he wrote a letter to one of the Secretaries of the Treasury.

'SIR, – You will easily recollect, when I had the honour of waiting upon you some time ago, I took the liberty to observe to you, that Dr Johnson would make an excellent figure in the House of Commons, and heartily wished he had a seat there. My reasons are briefly these :

'He possesses a great share of manly, nervous, and ready eloquence; is quick in discerning the strength and weakness of an argument; can express himself with clearness and precision, and fears the face of no man alive.

'His known character, as a man of extraordinary sense and unimpeached virtue, would secure him the attention of the House, and could not fail to give him a proper weight there.

'He is capable of the greatest application, and can undergo any degree of labour, where he sees it necessary, and where his heart and affections are strongly engaged. Nor is any thing to be apprehended from the supposed impetuosity of his temper. To the friends of the King you will find him a lamb, to his enemies a lion.

'For these reasons, I humbly apprehend that he would be a very able and useful member.'

This recommendation, we know, was not effectual; but

how, or for what reason, can only be conjectured. It is not to be believed that Mr Strahan would have applied, unless Johnson had approved of it. I never heard him mention the subject; but at a later period of his life, when Sir Joshua Reynolds told him that Mr Edmund Burke had said, that if he had come early into parliament, he certainly would have been the greatest speaker that ever was there, Johnson exclaimed, 'I should like to try my hand now.'

1772: ÆTAT. 63.] – In 1772 he was altogether quiescent as an authour; but it will be found from the various evidences which I shall bring together that his mind was acute, lively, and vigorous.

On Monday, March 23, I found him busy, preparing a fourth edition of his folio Dictionary. Mr Peyton, one of his original amanuenses, was writing for him.

He seemed also to be intent on some sort of chymical operation.¹ I was entertained by observing how he contrived to send Mr Peyton on an errand, without seeming to degrade him. 'Mr Peyton, – Mr Peyton, will you be so good as to take a walk to Temple-Bar? You will there see a chymist's shop; at which you will be pleased to buy for me an ounce of oil of vitriol; not spirit of vitriol, but oil of vitriol. It will cost three half-pence.' Peyton immediately went, and returned with it, and told him it cost but a penny.

On Sunday, April 5, after attending divine service at St Paul's church, I found him alone.

I mentioned a cause in which I had appeared as counsel at the bar of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, where a *Probationer*, [William MacMaster] (as one licensed to preach, but not yet ordained, is called,) was opposed in his application to be inducted, because it was alledged that he had been guilty of fornication five years before. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, if he has repented, it is not a sufficient objection. A man who is good enough to go to heaven, is good enough to be a clergyman. No, Sir, it is not a heinous sin. A heinous sin is that for which a man is punished with death or banishment.' BOSWELL. 'But, Sir, after I had argued that it was not a heinous sin, an old

clergyman rose up, and repeating the text of scripture denouncing judgement against whoremongers, asked, whether, considering this, there could be any doubt of fornication being a heinous sin.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, observe the word *whoremonger*. Every sin, if persisted in, will become heinous. Whoremonger is a dealer in whores, as ironmonger is a dealer in iron. But as you don't call a man an ironmonger for buying and selling a penknife; so you don't call a man a whoremonger for getting one wench with child.'

On Monday, April 6, I dined with him at Sir Alexander Macdonald's, where was a young officer in the regimentals of the Scots Royal, who talked with a vivacity, fluency, and precision so uncommon, that he attracted particular attention. He proved to be the Honourable Thomas Erskine.

Fielding being mentioned, Johnson exclaimed, 'he was a blockhead;' and upon my expressing my astonishment at so strange an assertion, he said, 'What I mean by his being a blockhead is that he was a barren rascal.' BOSWELL. 'Will you not allow, Sir, that he draws very natural pictures of human life?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, it is of very low life. Richardson used to say, that had he not known who Fielding was, he should have believed he was an ostler. Sir, there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's, than in all *Tom Jones*. I, indeed, never read *Joseph Andrews*.' ERSKINE. 'Surely, Sir, Richardson is very tedious.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment.' - I have already given my opinion of Fielding; but I cannot refrain from repeating here my wonder at Johnson's excessive and unaccountable depreciation of one of the best writers that England has produced.

Mr Erskine told us, that when he was in the island of Minorca, he not only read prayers, but preached two sermons to the regiment. He seemed to object to the passage in scripture where we are told that the angel of the Lord smote

in one night forty thousand Assyrians. 'Sir, (said Johnson,) you should recollect that there was a supernatural interposition; they were destroyed by pestilence. You are not to suppose that the angel of the LORD went about and stabbed each of them with a dagger, or knocked them on the head, man by man.'

I talked of the recent expulsion of six students from the University of Oxford, who were methodists, and would not desist from publicly praying and exhorting. JOHNSON. 'Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at an University who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach? Where is religion to be learnt but at an University? Sir, they were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows.' BOSWELL. 'But, was it not hard, Sir, to expel them, for I am told they were good beings?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I believe they might be good beings; but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field; but we turn her out of a garden.'

Desirous of calling Johnson forth to talk, and exercise his wit, though I should myself be the object of it, I resolutely ventured to undertake the defence of convivial indulgence in wine, though he was not to-night in the most genial humour. After urging the common plausible topicks, I at last had recourse to the maxim, *in vino veritas*; a man who is well warmed with wine will speak truth. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that may be an argument for drinking, if you suppose men in general to be liars. But, Sir, I would not keep company with a fellow, who lyes as long as he is sober, and whom you must make drunk before you can get a word of truth out of him.'

Mr Langton told us he was about to establish a school upon his estate, but it had been suggested to him, that it might have a tendency to make the people less industrious. JOHNSON. No, Sir. While learning to read and write is a distinction, the few who have that distinction may be the less inclined to work; but when every body learns to read and write, it is no longer a distinction. A man who has a laced

waistcoat is too fine a man to work; but if every body had laced waistcoats, we should have people working in laced waistcoats. There are no people whatever more industrious, none who work more, than our manufacturers; yet they have all learnt to read and write. Sir, you must not neglect doing a thing immediately good, from fear of remote evil; – from fear of its being abused. A man who has candles may sit up too late, which he would not do if he had not candles; but nobody will deny that the art of making candles, by which light is continued to us beyond the time that the sun gives us light, is a valuable art, and ought to be preserved.'

I paid him short visits both on Friday and Saturday, and seeing his large folio Greek Testament before him, beheld him with a reverential awe, and would not intrude upon his time. While he was thus employed to such good purpose, and while his friends in their intercourse with him constantly found a vigorous intellect and a lively imagination, it is melancholy to read in his private register, 'My mind is unsettled and my memory confused. I have of late turned my thoughts with a very useless earnestness upon past incidents. I have yet got no command over my thoughts; an unpleasant incident is almost certain to hinder my rest.'

On Sunday, April 19, being Easter-day, General [Pasquale] Paoli [the Corsican patriot] and I paid him a visit before dinner. We talked of the notion that blind persons can distinguish colours by the touch. Johnson said, that Professor [Nicholas] Sanderson mentions his having attempted to do it, but that he found he was aiming at an impossibility; that to be sure a difference in the surface makes the difference of colours; but that difference is so fine, that it is not sensible to the touch. The General mentioned jugglers and fraudulent gamblers, who could know cards by the touch. Dr Johnson said, 'the cards used by such persons must be less polished than ours commonly are.'

We talked of sounds. The General said, there was no beauty in a simple sound, but only in an harmonious composition of sounds. I presumed to differ from this opinion, and mentioned the soft and sweet sound of a fine woman's

voice. JOHNSON. 'No, Sir, if a serpent or a toad uttered it, you would think it ugly.' BOSWELL. 'So you would think, Sir, were a beautiful tune to be uttered by one of those animals.' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir, it would be admired. We have seen fine fiddlers whom we liked as little as toads,' (laughing).

While I remained in London this spring, I was with him at several other times, both by himself and in company. Without specifying each particular day, I have preserved the following memorable things.

I regretted the reflection in his Preface to Shakspeare against Garrick, to whom we cannot but apply the following passage: 'I collated such copies as I could procure, and wished for more, but have not found the collectors of these rarities very communicative.' I told him, that Garrick had complained to me of it, and had vindicated himself by assuring me, that Johnson was made welcome to the full use of his collection, and that he left the key of it with a servant, with orders to have a fire and every convenience for him. I found Johnson's notion was, that Garrick wanted to be courted for them, and that, on the contrary, Garrick should have courted him, and sent him the plays of his own accord. But, indeed, considering the slovenly and careless manner in which books were treated by Johnson, it could not be expected that scarce and valuable editions should have been lent to him.

A gentleman [Boswell himself] having to some of the usual arguments for drinking added this: 'You know, Sir, drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, if he sat next *you*.'

A learned gentleman [Robert Vansittart] who in the course of conversation wished to inform us of this simple fact, that the Counsel upon the circuit at Shrewsbury were much bitten by fleas, took, I suppose, seven or eight minutes in relating it circumstantially. He in a plenitude of phrase told us, that large bales of woollen cloth were lodged in the town-hall; — that by reason of this, fleas nestled there in prodigious

numbers; that the lodgings of the counsel were near to the town-hall; – and that those little animals moved from place to place with wonderful agility. Johnson sat in great impatience till the gentleman had finished his tedious narrative, and then burst out (playfully however,) ‘It is a pity, Sir, that you have not seen a lion; for a flea has taken you such a time, that a lion must have served you a twelve-month.’

He would not allow Scotland to derive any credit from Lord Mansfield; for he was educated in England. ‘Much (said he,) may be made of a Scotchman, if he be *caught* young.’

At Mr Thrale’s, in the evening, Lord Chesterfield being mentioned, Johnson remarked, that almost all of that celebrated nobleman’s witty sayings were puns. He, however, allowed the merit of good wit to his Lordship’s saying of Lord Tyrawley and himself, when both very old and infirm: ‘Tyrawley and I have been dead these two years; but we don’t choose to have it known.’

On the 9th of April, being Good Friday, I breakfasted with him on tea and cross-buns; *Doctor* Levet, as Frank called him, making the tea. He carried me with him to the church of St Clement Danes, where he had his seat; and his behaviour was, as I had imagined to myself, solemnly devout. I shall never forget the tremulous earnestness with which he pronounced the awful petition in the Litany: ‘In the hour of death, and at the day of judgement, good LORD deliver us.’

To my great surprize he asked me to dine with him on Easter-day. I never supposed that he had a dinner at his house; for I had not then heard of any one of his friends having been entertained at his table. He told me, ‘I generally have a meat pye on Sunday: it is baked at a publick oven, which is very properly allowed, because one man can attend it; and thus the advantage is obtained of not keeping servants from church to dress dinners.’

I supposed we should scarcely have knives and forks, and only some strange, uncouth, ill-drest dish: but I found every

thing in very good order. We had no other company but Mrs Williams and a young woman whom I did not know. As a dinner here was considered as a singular phænomenon, and as I was frequently interrogated on the subject, my readers may perhaps be desirous to know our bill of fare. Foote, I remember, in allusion to Francis, the *negro*, was willing to suppose that our repast was *black broth*. But the fact was, that we had a very good soup, a boiled leg of lamb and spinach, a veal pye, and a rice pudding.²

I told him that Mrs Macaulay said, she wondered how he could reconcile his political principles with his moral; his notions of inequality and subordination with wishing well to the happiness of all mankind, who might live so agreeably, had they all their portions of land, and none to domineer over another. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, I reconcile my principles very well, because mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination. Were they to be in this pretty state of equality, they would soon degenerate into brutes; — they would become Monboddo's nation; — their tails would grow. Sir, all would be losers were all to work for all: — they would have no intellectual improvement. All intellectual improvement arises from leisure; all leisure arises from one working for another.'

On Thursday, April 15, I dined with him and Dr Goldsmith at General Paoli's. We found here Signor [Vincenzo] Martinelli, of Florence, authour of a *History of England*, in Italian, printed at London.

I spoke of Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, in the Scottish dialect, as the best pastoral that had ever been written; not only abounding with beautiful rural imagery, and just and pleasing sentiments, but being a real picture of manners; and I offered to teach Dr Johnson to understand it. 'No, Sir, (said he,) I won't learn it. You shall retain your superiority by my not knowing it.'

We talked of the King's coming to see Goldsmith's new play. — 'I wish he would,' said Goldsmith; adding, however, with an affected indifference, 'Not that it would do me the least good.' JOHNSON. 'Well then, Sir, let us say it would

do *him* good, (laughing.) No, Sir, this affectation will not pass; — it is mighty idle. In such a state as ours, who would not wish to please the Chief Magistrate?" GOLDSMITH. 'I do wish to please him. I remember a line in Dryden, —

"And every poet is the monarch's friend."

It ought to be reversed.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, there are finer lines in Dryden on this subject : —

"For colleges on bounteous Kings depend,
And never rebel was to arts a friend."

GOLDSMITH. 'The greatest musical performers have but small emoluments. [Felice] Giardini [the violinist], I am told, does not get above seven hundred a year.' JOHNSON. 'That is, indeed, but little for a man to get, who does best that which so many endeavour to do. There is nothing, I think, in which the power of art is shown so much as in playing on the fiddle. In all other things we can do something at first. Any man will forge a bar of iron, if you give him a hammer; not so well as a smith, but tolerably. A man will saw a piece of wood, and make a box, though a clumsy one; but give him a fiddle and a fiddle-stick, and he can do nothing.'

On Monday, April 19, he called on me with Mrs Williams, in Mr Strahan's coach, and carried me out to dine with Mr [James] Elphinston, at his academy at Kensington.³ A printer having acquired a fortune sufficient to keep his coach, was a good topick for the credit of literature. Mrs Williams said, that another printer, Mr [Archibald] Hamilton, had not waited so long as Mr Strahan, but had kept his coach several years sooner. JOHNSON. 'He was in the right. Life is short. The sooner that a man begins to enjoy his wealth the better.'

Mr Elphinston talked of a new book that was much admired, and asked Dr Johnson if he had read it. JOHNSON. 'I have looked into it.' 'What, (said Elphinstone,) have you not read it through?' Johnson, offended at being thus pressed, and so obliged to own his cursory mode of reading, answered tartly, 'No, Sir, do *you* read books *through*?'

He this day again defended duelling, and put his argument upon what I have ever thought the most solid basis; that if publick war be allowed to be consistent with morality, private war must be equally so.

On Wednesday, April 21, I dined with him at Mr Thrale's. A gentleman [Arthur Murphy] attacked Garrick for being vain. JOHNSON. 'No wonder, Sir, that he is vain; a man who is perpetually flattered in every mode that can be conceived. So many bellows have blown the fire, that one wonders he is not by this time become a cinder.' BOSWELL. 'And such bellows too. Lord Mansfield with his cheeks like to burst: Lord Chatham like an Æolus. I have read such notes from them to him, as were enough to turn his head.' JOHNSON. 'True. When he whom every body else flatters, flatters me, I then am truly happy.' MRS THRALE. 'The sentiment is in Congreve, I think.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Madam, in *The Way of the World* :

"If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart which others bleed for, bleed for me."

No, Sir, I should not be surprised though Garrick chained the ocean, and lashed the winds.'

A learned gentleman [probably Sir William Weller Pepys] who holds a considerable office in the law [Master in Chancery], expatiated on the happiness of a savage life; and mentioned an instance of an officer who had actually lived for some time in the wilds of America, of whom, when in that state, he quoted this reflection with an air of admiration, as if it had been deeply philosophical: 'Here am I, free and unrestrained, amidst the rude magnificence of Nature, with this Indian woman by my side, and this gun with which I can procure food when I want it: what more can be desired for human happiness?' It did not require much sagacity to foresee that such a sentiment would not be permitted to pass without due animadversion. JOHNSON. 'Do not allow yourself, Sir, to be imposed upon by such gross absurdity. It is sad stuff; it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as

well exclaim, – Here am I with this cow and this grass; what being can enjoy greater felicity?"

We talked of the melancholy end of a gentleman [William Fitzherbert, M.P.] who had destroyed himself. JOHNSON. 'It was owing to imaginary difficulties in his affairs, which, had he talked with any friend, would soon have vanished.' BOSWELL. 'Do you think, Sir, that all who commit suicide are mad?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, they are often not universally disordered in their intellects, but one passion presses so upon them, that they yield to it, and commit suicide, as a passionate man will stab another.' He added, 'I have often thought, that after a man has taken the resolution to kill himself, it is not courage in him to do any thing, however desperate, because he has nothing to fear. He may then go and take the King of Prussia by the nose, at the head of his army. He cannot fear the rack, who is resolved to kill himself. When Eustace Budgel was walking down to the Thames, determined to drown himself, he might, if he pleased, without any apprehension of danger, have turned aside, and first set fire to St James's palace.'

On Tuesday, April 27, Mr Beauclerk and I called on him in the morning. As we walked up Johnson's-court, I said, 'I have a veneration for this court;' and was glad to find that Beauclerk had the same reverential enthusiasm. We found him alone.

He said, 'Goldsmith should not be for ever attempting to shine in conversation : he has not temper for it, he is so much mortified when he fails. Sir, a game of jokes is composed partly of skill, partly of chance. A man may be beat at times by one who has not the tenth part of his wit. Now Goldsmith's putting himself against another, is like a man laying a hundred to one who cannot spare the hundred. It is not worth a man's while. A man should not lay a hundred to one, unless he can easily spare it, though he has a hundred chances for him : he can get but a guinea, and he may lose a hundred. Goldsmith is in this state. When he contends, if he gets the better, it is a very little addition to a man of his literary repu-

tation : if he does not get the better, he is miserably vexed.'

Johnson's own superlative power of wit set him above any risk of such uneasiness. Garrick had remarked to me of him, a few days before, 'Rabelais and all other wits are nothing compared with him. You may be diverted by them; but Johnson gives you a forcible hug, and shakes laughter out of you, whether you will or no.'

Goldsmith, however, was often very fortunate in his witty contests, even when he entered the lists with Johnson himself. Sir Joshua Reynolds was in company with them one day, when Goldsmith said, that he thought he could write a good fable, mentioned the simplicity which that kind of composition requires, and observed, that in most fables the animals introduced seldom talk in character. 'For instance, (said he,) the fable of the little fishes, who saw birds fly over their heads, and envying them, petitioned Jupiter to be changed into birds. The skill (continued he,) consists in making them talk like little fishes.' While he indulged himself in this fanciful reverie, he observed Johnson shaking his sides, and laughing. Upon which he smartly proceeded, 'Why, Dr Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES.'

On Friday, April 30, I dined with him at Mr Beauclerk's, where were Lord Charlemont, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and some more members of the LITERARY CLUB, whom he had obligingly invited to meet me, as I was this evening to be balloted for as candidate for admission into that distinguished society. Johnson had done me the honour to propose me, and Beauclerk was very zealous for me.

Goldsmith being mentioned; JOHNSON. 'It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows. He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else.' SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. 'Yet there is no man whose company is more liked.' JOHNSON. 'To be sure, Sir. When people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer, their inferior while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself is very

true, — he always gets the better when he argues alone; meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it; but when he comes into company, grows confused, and unable to talk. Take him as a poet, his *Traveller* is a very fine performance; ay, and so is his *Deserted Village*, were it not sometimes too much the echo of his *Traveller*. Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, — as a comick writer, — or as an historian, he stands in the first class.' BOSWELL. 'An historian! My dear Sir, you surely will not rank his compilation of the Roman History with the works of other historians of this age?' JOHNSON. 'Why, who are before him?' BOSWELL. 'Hume, — Robertson, — Lord Lyttelton.' JOHNSON (his antipathy to the Scotch beginning to rise). 'I have not read Hume; but, doubtless, Goldsmith's *History* is better than the *verbiage* of Robertson, or the foppery of Dalrymple.⁴ No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils: "Read over your compositions, and where ever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out." (...) Sir, [Goldsmith] has the art of compiling, and of saying every thing he has to say in a pleasing manner. He is now writing a Natural History and will make it as entertaining as a Persian Tale.'

Johnson praised John Bunyan highly. 'His *Pilgrim's Progress* has great merit, both for invention, imagination, and the conduct of the story; and it has the best evidence of its merit, the general and continued approbation of mankind. Few books, I believe, have had a more extensive sale. It is remarkable, that it begins very much like the poem of Dante; yet there was no translation of Dante when Bunyan wrote. There is reason to think that he had read Spenser.'

A proposition which had been agitated, that monuments to eminent persons should, for the time to come, be erected in St Paul's church as well as in Westminster-abbey, was mentioned: and it was asked, who should be honoured by having his monument first erected there. Somebody suggested Pope.

JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, as Pope was a Roman Catholick, I would not have his to be first. I think Milton's rather should have the precedence. I think more highly of him now than I did at twenty. There is more thinking in him and in Butler, than in any of our poets.'

The gentlemen went away to their club, and I was left at Beauclerk's till the fate of my election should be announced to me. I sat in a state of anxiety which even the charming conversation of Lady Di Beauclerk could not entirely dissipate. In a short time I received the agreeable intelligence that I was chosen. I hastened to the place of meeting, and was introduced to such a society as can seldom be found. Mr Edmund Burke, whom I then saw for the first time, and whose splendid talents had long made me ardently wish for his acquaintance; Dr Nugent, Mr Garrick, Dr Goldsmith, Mr (afterwards Sir William) Jones, and the company with whom I had dined. Upon my entrance, Johnson placed himself behind a chair, on which he leaned as on a desk or pulpit, and with humorous formality gave me a *Charge*, pointing out the conduct expected from me as a good member of this club.

Much pleasant conversation passed, which Johnson relished with great good humour. But his conversation alone, or what led to it, or was interwoven with it, is the business of this work.

On Saturday, May 1, we dined by ourselves at our old rendezvous, the Mitre tavern. He was placid, but not much disposed to talk. He observed that 'The Irish mix better with the English than the Scotch do; their language is nearer to English; as a proof of which, they succeed very well as players, which Scotchmen do not. Then, Sir, they have not that extreme nationality which we find in the Scotch. I will do you, Boswell, the justice to say, that you are the most *unscottified* of your countrymen. You are almost the only instance of a Scotchman that I have known, who did not at every other sentence bring in some other Scotchman.'

On Friday, May 7, I breakfasted with him at Mr Thrale's in the Borough. While we were alone, I endeavoured as well

as I could to apologise for a lady [Lady Diana Beauclerk]⁵ who had been divorced from her husband by act of Parliament. I said, that he had used her very ill, had behaved brutally to her, and that she could not continue to live with him without having her delicacy contaminated; that all affection for him was thus destroyed; that the essence of conjugal union being gone, there remained only a cold form, a mere civil obligation; that she was in the prime of life, with qualities to produce happiness; that these ought not to be lost; and, that the gentleman [Topham Beauclerk] on whose account she was divorced had gained her heart while thus unhappily situated. Seduced, perhaps, by the charms of the lady in question, I thus attempted to palliate what I was sensible could not be justified; for, when I had finished my harangue, my venerable friend gave me a proper check: 'My dear Sir, never accustom your mind to mingle virtue and vice. The woman's a whore, and there's an end on't.'

BOSWELL. 'I am well assured that the people of Otaheite who have the bread tree, the fruit of which serves them for bread, laughed heartily when they were informed of the tedious process necessary with us to have bread; - plowing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, threshing, grinding, baking.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, all ignorant savages will laugh when they are told of the advantages of civilized life. Were you to tell men who live without houses, how we pile brick upon brick, and rafter upon rafter, and that after a house is raised to a certain height, a man tumbles off a scaffold, and breaks his neck, they would laugh heartily at our folly in building; but it does not follow that men are better without houses. No, Sir, (holding up a slice of a good loaf,) this is better than the bread tree.'

In our way to the club to-night, when I regretted that Goldsmith would, upon every occasion, endeavour to shine, by which he often exposed himself, Mr Langton observed, that he was not like Addison, who was content with the fame of his writings, and did not aim also at excellency in conversation, for which he found himself unfit; and that he said to a lady, who complained of his having talked little in com-

pany, 'Madam, I have but nine-pence in ready money, but I can draw for a thousand pounds.' I observed, that Goldsmith had a great deal of gold in his cabinet, but, not content with that, was always taking out his purse. JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, and that so often an empty purse!'

It may also be observed, that Goldsmith was sometimes content to be treated with an easy familiarity, but, upon occasions, would be consequential and important. An instance of this occurred in a small particular. Johnson had a way of contracting the names of his friends; as Beauclerk, Beau; Boswell, Bozzy; Langton, Lanky; Murphy, Mur; Sheridan, Sherry. I remember one day, when Tom Davies was telling that Dr Johnson said, 'We are all in labour for a name to *Goldy's* play,' Goldsmith seemed displeased that such a liberty should be taken with his name, and said, 'I have often desired him not to call me *Goldy*.' Tom was remarkably attentive to the most minute circumstance about Johnson. I recollect his telling me once, on my arrival in London, 'Sir, our great friend has made an improvement on his appellation of old Mr Sheridan. He calls him now *Sherry derry*.'

I have known Johnson at times exceedingly diverted at what seemed to others a very small sport. He now laughed immoderately without any reason that we could perceive, at our friend's [Langton's] making his will; called him the *testator*, and added. 'I dare say, he thinks he has done a mighty thing. He won't stay till he gets home to his seat in the country, to produce this wonderful deed: he'll call up the landlord of the first inn on the road; and, after a suitable preface upon mortality and the uncertainty of life, will tell him that he should not delay making his will: and here, Sir, will he say, is my will, which I have just made, with the assistance of one of the ablest lawyers in the kingdom; and he will read it to him (laughing all the time). He believes he has made this will; but he did not make it: you, Chambers, made it for him. I trust you have had more conscience than to make him say, "being of sound understanding;" ha, ha,

ha ! I hope he has left me a legacy. I'd have his will turned into verse, like a ballad.'

In this playful manner did he run on, exulting in his own pleasantry, which certainly was not such as might be expected from the authour of *The Rambler*, but which is here preserved, that my readers may be acquainted even with the slightest occasional characteristic of so eminent a man.

Mr [Robert]⁶ Chambers did not by any means relish this jocularity upon a matter of which *pars magna fuit*, [he was no small part] and seemed impatient till he got rid of us. Johnson could not stop his merriment, but continued it all the way till we got without the Temple-gate. He then burst into such a fit of laughter, that he appeared to be almost in a convulsion; and, in order to support himself, laid hold of one of the posts at the side of the foot pavement, and sent forth peals so loud, that in the silence of the night his voice seemed to resound from Temple-bar to Fleet-ditch.

This most ludicrous exhibition of the awful, melancholy, and venerable Johnson, happened well to counteract the feelings of sadness which I used to experience when parting with him for a considerable time. I accompanied him to his door, where he gave me his blessing.

In a letter from Edinburgh, dated the 29th of May [1773], I pressed him to persevere in his resolution to make this year the projected visit to the Hebrides, of which he and I had talked for many years, and which I was confident would afford us much entertainment.

'To JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

'DEAR SIR, - I shall set out from London on Friday the sixth of this month, and purpose not to loiter much by the way. Which day I shall be at Edinburgh, I cannot exactly tell. I suppose I must drive to an inn, and send a porter to find you . . .

I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

'August 3, 1773.'

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

His stay in Scotland was from the 18th of August, on

which day he arrived, till the 22nd of November, when he set out on his return to London; and I believe ninety-four days were never passed by any man in a more vigorous exertion.

He came by way of Berwick upon Tweed to Edinburgh, where he remained a few days, and then went by St Andrew's, Aberdeen, Inverness, and Fort Augustus, to the Hebrides, to visit which was the principal object he had in view. He visited the isles of Sky, Rasay, Col, Mull, Inch-kenneth, and Icolmkill. He travelled through Argyleshire by Inverary, and from thence by Lochlomond and Dunbarton to Glasgow, then by Loudon to Auchinleck in Ayrshire, the seat of my family, and then by Hamilton, back to Edinburgh, where he again spent some time. He thus saw the four Universities of Scotland, its three principal cities, and as much of the Highland and insular life as was sufficient for his philosophical contemplation. I had the pleasure of accompanying him during the whole of this journey. He was respectfully entertained by the great, the learned, and the elegant, wherever he went; nor was he less delighted with the hospitality which he experienced in humbler life.

His various adventures, and the force and vivacity of his mind, as exercised during this peregrination, upon innumerable topicks, have been faithfully, and to the best of my abilities, displayed in my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, to which, as the publick has been pleased to honour it by a very extensive circulation, I beg leave to refer, as to a separate and remarkable portion of his life.

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No man was ever more remarkable for personal courage [than Johnson]. He had, indeed, an awful dread of death, or rather, 'of something after death;' and what rational man, who seriously thinks of quitting all that he has ever known, and going into a new and unknown state of being, can be without that dread? But his fear was from reflection; his courage natural. His fear, in that one instance, was the result of philosophical and religious consideration. He feared death, but he feared nothing else, not even what might occa-

sion death. Many instances of his resolution may be mentioned. One day, at Mr Beauclerk's house in the country, when two large dogs were fighting, he went up to them, and beat them till they separated; and at another time, when told of the danger there was that a gun might burst if charged with many balls, he put in six or seven, and fired it off against a wall. Mr Langton told me, that when they were swimming together near Oxford, he cautioned Dr Johnson against a pool, which was reckoned particularly dangerous; upon which Johnson directly swam into it. He told me himself that one night he was attacked in the street by four men, to whom he would not yield, but kept them all at bay, till the watch came up, and carried both him and them to the round-house. In the playhouse at Lichfield, as Mr Garrick informed me, Johnson having for a moment quitted a chair which was placed for him between the side-scenes, a gentleman took possession of it, and when Johnson on his return civilly demanded his seat, rudely refused to give it up; upon which Johnson laid hold of it, and tossed him and the chair into the pit. Foote, who so successfully revived the old comedy, by exhibiting living characters, had resolved to imitate Johnson on the stage, expecting great profits from his ridicule of so celebrated a man. Johnson being informed of his intention, and being at dinner at Mr Thomas Davies's the bookseller, from whom I had the story, he asked Mr Davies 'what was the common price of an oak stick;' and being answered sixpence, 'Why then, Sir, (said he,) give me leave to send your servant to purchase me a shilling one. I'll have a double quantity; for I am told Foote means to *take me off*, as he calls it, and I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity.' Davies took care to acquaint Foote of this, which effectually checked the wantonness of the mimick.

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On Tuesday, March 21 [1775], I arrived in London; and on repairing to Dr Johnson's before dinner, found him in his study, sitting with Mr Peter Garrick, the elder brother of David, strongly resembling him in countenance and voice,

but of more sedate and placid manners. The doubts which, in my correspondence with him, I had ventured to state as to the justice and wisdom of the conduct of Great-Britain towards the American colonies, while I at the same time requested that he would enable me to inform myself upon that momentous subject, he had altogether disregarded; and had recently published a pamphlet, entitled, *Taxation no Tyranny; an answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress*.⁷

He had long before indulged most unfavourable sentiments of our fellow-subjects in America. For, as early as 1769, I was told by Dr John Campbell, that he had said of them, 'Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for any thing we allow them short of hanging.'

That this pamphlet was written at the desire of those who were then in power, I have no doubt; and, indeed, he owned to me, that it had been revised and curtailed by some of them. He told me, that they had struck out one passage, which was to this effect: — 'That the Colonists could with no solidity argue from their not having been taxed while in their infancy, that they should not now be taxed. We do not put a calf into the plow; we wait till he is an ox.' He said, 'They struck it out either critically as too ludicrous, or politically as too exasperating. I care not which. It was their business. If an architect says, I will build five stories, and the man who employs him says, I will have only three, the employer is to decide.' 'Yes, sir, (said I,) in ordinary cases. But should it be so when the architect gives his skill and labour *gratis*?'

On Monday, March 27, I breakfasted with him at Mr Strahan's. He told us, that he was engaged to go that evening to Mrs [Frances] Abington's benefit. 'She was visiting some ladies whom I was visiting, and begged that I would come to her benefit. I told her I could not hear: but she insisted so much on my coming, that it would have been brutal to have refused her.' This was a speech quite characteristic. He loved to bring forward his having been in the gay circles of life; and he was, perhaps, a little vain of the solicitations of this elegant and fashionable actress.

Mr Strahan talked of launching into the great ocean of London, in order to have a chance for rising into eminence; and, observing that many men were kept back from trying their fortunes there, because they were born to a competency, said, 'Small certainties are the bane of men of talents;' which Johnson confirmed. Mr Strahan put Johnson in mind of a remark which he had made to him; 'There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money.' 'The more one thinks of this, (said Strahan,) the juster it will appear.'

Mr Strahan had taken a poor boy [William Davenport] from the country as an apprentice, upon Johnson's recommendation. Johnson having enquired after him, said, 'Mr Strahan, let me have five guineas on account, and I'll give this boy one. Nay, if a man recommends a boy, and does nothing for him, it is sad work. Call him down.'

I followed him into the court-yard, behind Mr Strahan's house; and there I had proof of what I had heard him profess, that he talked alike to all. 'Some people (said he,) tell you that they let themselves down to the capacity of their hearers. I never do that. I speak uniformly, in as intelligible a manner as I can.'

'Well, my boy, how do you go on?' - 'Pretty well, Sir; but they are afraid I an't strong enough for some parts of the business.' JOHNSON. 'Why, I shall be sorry for it; for when you consider with how little mental power and corporeal labour a printer can get a guinea a week, it is a very desirable occupation for you. Do you hear, - take all the pains you can; and if this does not do, we must think of some other way of life for you. There's a guinea.'

Here was one of the many, many instances of his active benevolence. At the same time, the slow and sonorous solemnity with which, while he bent himself down, he addressed a little thick short-legged boy, contrasted with the boy's awkwardness and awe, could not but excite some ludicrous emotions.

I met him at Drury-lane play-house in the evening. Sir Joshua Reynolds, at Mrs Abington's request, had promised

to bring a body of wits to her benefit; and having secured forty places in the front boxes, had done me the honour to put me in the group. Johnson sat on the seat directly behind me; and as he could neither see nor hear at such a distance from the stage, he was wrapped up in grave abstraction, and seemed quite a cloud, amidst all the sunshine of glitter and gaiety. I wondered at his patience in sitting out a play of five acts, and a farce or two. He said very little; but after the prologue to *Bon Ton* had been spoken, which he could hear pretty well from the more slow and distinct utterance, he talked of prologue-writing, and observed, 'Dryden has written prologues superiour to any that David Garrick has written; but David Garrick has written more good prologues than Dryden has done. It is wonderful that he has been able to write such a variety of them.'

At Mr Beauclerk's, where I supped, was Mr Garrick, whom I made happy with Johnson's praise of his prologues.

Next day I dined with Johnson at Mr Thrale's. He attacked Gray, calling him a 'dull fellow.' BOSWELL. 'I understand he was reserved, and might appear dull in company; but surely he was not dull in poetry.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, he was dull in company, dull in his closet, dull every where. He was dull in a new way, and that made people think him GREAT. He was a mechanical poet.' He then repeated some ludicrous lines, which have escaped my memory, and said, 'Is not that GREAT, like his Odes? No, Sir, there are but two good stanzas in Gray's poetry, which are in his *Elegy in a Country Church-yard*.' He then repeated the stanza,

'For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,' &c.

mistaking one word; for instead of *precincts* he said *confines*. He added, 'The other stanza I forget.'

A young lady [Lady Susan Fox Strangways] who had married a man [William O'Brien] much her inferiour in rank being mentioned, a question arose how a woman's relations should behave to her in such a situation; and, while I recapitulate the debate, and recollect what has since happened, I cannot but be struck in a manner that delicacy forbids me

to express. While I contended that she ought to be treated with an inflexible steadiness of displeasure, Mrs Thrale was all for mildness and forgiveness, and, according to the vulgar phrase, 'making the best of a bad bargain.' JOHNSON. 'Madam, we must distinguish. Were I a man of rank, I would not let a daughter starve who had made a mean marriage; but having voluntarily degraded herself from the station which she was originally entitled to hold, I would support her only in that which she herself had chosen; and would not put her on a level with my other daughters. You are to consider, Madam, that it is our duty to maintain the subordination of civilized society; and when there is a gross and shameful deviation from rank, it should be punished so as to deter others from the same perversion.'

On Friday, March 31, I supped with him and some friends at a tavern. One of the company [Boswell] attempted, with too much forwardness, to rally him on his late appearance at the theatre; but had reason to repent of his temerity. 'Why, Sir, did you go to Mrs Abington's benefit? Did you see?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir.' 'Did you hear?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir.' 'Why then, Sir, did you go?' JOHNSON. 'Because, Sir, she is a favourite of the publick; and when the publick cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit too.'

Next morning I won a small bet from Lady Diana Beauclerk, by asking him as to one of his peculiarities, which her Ladyship laid I durst not do. It seems he had been frequently observed at the Club to put into his pocket the Seville oranges, after he had squeezed the juice of them into the drink which he made for himself. Beauclerk and Garrick talked of it to me, and seemed to think that he had a strange unwillingness to be discovered. We could not divine what he did with them; and this was the bold question to be put. I saw on his table the spoils of the preceding night, some fresh peels nicely scraped and cut into pieces. 'O, Sir, (said I,) I now partly see what you do with the squeezed oranges which you put into your pocket at the Club.' JOHNSON. 'I have a great love for them.' BOSWELL. 'And pray, Sir, what do you

do with them? You scrape them, it seems, very neatly, and what next?' JOHNSON. 'I let them dry, Sir.' BOSWELL. 'And what next?' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, you shall know their fate no further.' BOSWELL. 'Then the world must be left in the dark. It must be said (assuming a mock solemnity,) he scraped them, and let them dry, but what he did with them next, he never could be prevailed upon to tell.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, you should say it more emphatically: — he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friends, to tell.'⁸

He had this morning received his Diploma as Doctor of Laws from the University of Oxford. He did not vaunt his new dignity, but I understood he was highly pleased with it.

His *Taxation no Tyranny* being mentioned, he said, 'I think I have not been attacked enough for it. Attack is the re-action; I never think I have hit hard, unless it rebounds.' BOSWELL. 'I don't know, Sir, what you would be at. Five or six shots of small arms in every newspaper, and repeated cannonading in pamphlets, might, I think, satisfy you. But, Sir, you'll never make out this match, of which we have talked, with a certain political lady, [Mrs Macaulay] since you are so severe against her principles.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, I have the better chance for that. She is like the Amazons of old; she must be courted by the sword. But I have not been severe upon her.' BOSWELL. 'Yes, Sir, you have made her ridiculous.' JOHNSON. 'That was already done, Sir. To endeavour to make *her* ridiculous, is like blacking the chimney.'

I talked of the cheerfulness of Fleet-street, owing to the constant quick succession of people which we perceive passing through it. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, Fleet-street has a very animated appearance; but I think the full tide of human existence is at Charing-cross.'

I mentioned that Dr Thomas Campbell had come from Ireland to London, principally to see Dr Johnson. He seemed angry at this observation. DAVIES. 'Why, you know, Sir, there came a man from Spain to see Livy; and Corelli came to England to see Purcell, and when he heard he was dead, went directly back again to Italy.' JOHNSON. 'I should not

have wished to be dead to disappoint Campbell, had he been so foolish as you represent him; but I should have wished to have been a hundred miles off.' This was apparently perverse; and I do believe it was not his real way of thinking: he could not but like a man who came so far to see him. He laughed with some complacency, when I told him Campbell's odd expression to me concerning him: 'That having seen such a man, was a thing to talk of a century hence,' - as if he could live so long.

We got into an argument whether the Judges who went to India might with propriety engage in trade. Johnson warmly maintained that they might. 'For why (he urged,) should not Judges get riches, as well as those who deserve them less?' I said, they should have sufficient salaries, and have nothing to take off their attention from the affairs of the publick. JOHNSON. 'No Judge, Sir, can give his whole attention to his office; and it is very proper that he should employ what time he has to himself, for his own advantage, in the most profitable manner.' 'Then, Sir, (said Davies, who enlivened the dispute by making it somewhat dramatick,) he may become an insurer; and when he is going to the bench, he may be stopped, - "Your Lordship cannot go yet - here is a bunch of invoices: several ships are about to sail."' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you may as well say a Judge should not have a house; for they may come and tell him, "Your Lordship's house is on fire;" and so, instead of minding the business of his Court, he is to be occupied in getting the engine with the greatest speed. A Judge may be a farmer; but he is not to geld his own pigs. A Judge may play a little at cards for his amusement; but he is not to play at marbles, or at chuck-farthing in the Piazza. No, Sir; there is no profession to which a man gives a very great proportion of this time. It is wonderful, when a calculation is made, how little the mind is actually employed in the discharge of any profession. I once wrote for a magazine: I made a calculation, that if I should write but a page a day, at the same rate, I should, in ten years, write nine volumes in folio, of an ordinary size and print.' BOSWELL. 'Such as Carte's *History*?' JOHNSON.

'Yes, Sir. When a man writes from his own mind, he writes very rapidly. The greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading, in order to write : a man will turn over half a library to make one book.'

Friday, April 7, I dined with him at a Tavern, with a numerous company. JOHNSON. 'I have been reading [Richard] Twiss's *Travels in Spain*, which are just come out. They are as good as the first book of travels that you will take up. I have not, indeed, cut the leaves yet; but I have read in them where the pages are open, and I do not suppose that what is in the pages which are closed is worse than what is in the open pages.'

Patriotism having become one of our topicks, Johnson suddenly uttered, in a strong determined tone, an apophthegm, at which many will start : 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.' But let it be considered, that he did not mean a real and generous love of our country, but that pretended patriotism which so many, in all ages and countries, have made a cloak for self-interest. I maintained, that certainly all patriots were not scoundrels. Being urged, (not by Johnson,) to name one exception, I mentioned an eminent person, [Edmund Burke] whom we all greatly admired. JOHNSON. 'Sir, I do not say that he is *not* honest; but we have no reason to conclude from his political conduct that he is honest. Were he to accept of a place from this ministry, he would lose that character of firmness which he has, and might be turned out of his place in a year. This ministry is neither stable, nor grateful to their friends, as Sir Robert Walpole was, so that he may think it more for his interest to take his chance of his party coming in.'

Mrs [Hannah] Pritchard being mentioned, he said, 'Her playing was quite mechanical. It is wonderful how little mind she had. Sir, she had never read the tragedy of *Macbeth* all through. She no more thought of the play out of which her part was taken, than a shoemaker thinks of the skin, out of which the piece of leather, of which he is making a pair of shoes, is cut.'

On Saturday [April 8], I dined with him at Mr Thrale's,

where we met the Irish Dr [Thomas] Campbell. Johnson had supped the night before at Mrs Abington's, with some fashionable people whom he named; and he seemed much pleased with having made one in so elegant a circle. Nor did he omit to pique his *mistress* a little with jealousy of her housewifery; for he said (with a smile,) 'Mrs Abington's jelly, my dear lady, was better than yours.'

Mrs Thrale, who frequently practised a coarse mode of flattery, by repeating his *bon-mots* in his hearing, told us that he had said, a certain celebrated actor [Springer Barry] was just fit to stand at the door of an auction-room with a long pole, and cry 'Pray gentlemen, walk in;' and that a certain authour, [Arthur Murphy] upon hearing this, had said, that another still more celebrated actor [Garrick] was fit for nothing better than that, and would pick your pocket after you came out. JOHNSON. Nay, my dear lady, there is no wit in what our friend added; there is only abuse. You may as well say of any man that he will pick a pocket. Besides, the man who is stationed at the door does not pick people's pockets; that is done within, by the auctioneer.'

I must, again and again, intreat of my readers not to suppose that my imperfect record of conversation contains the whole of what was said by Johnson, or other eminent persons who lived with him. What I have preserved, however, has the value of the most perfect authenticity.

He asserted that *the present* was never a happy state to any human being; but that, as every part of life, of which we are conscious, was at some point of time a period yet to come, in which felicity was expected, there was some happiness produced by hope. Being pressed upon this subject, and asked if he really was of opinion, that though, in general, happiness was very rare in human life, a man was not sometimes happy in the moment that was present, he answered, 'Never, but when he is drunk.'

He was pleased to say, 'If you come to settle here, we will have one day in the week on which we will meet by ourselves. That is the happiest conversation where there is no competition, no vanity, but a calm quiet interchange of senti-

ments.' In his private register this evening is thus marked, 'Boswell sat with me till night; we had some serious talk.' It also appears from the same record, that after I left him he was occupied in religious duties, in 'giving Francis, his servant, some directions for preparation to communicate; in reviewing his life, and resolving on better conduct.' The humility and piety which he discovers on such occasions, is truly edifying. No saint, however, in the course of his religious warfare, was more sensible of the unhappy failure of pious resolves, than Johnson. He said one day, talking to an acquaintance on this subject, 'Sir, Hell is paved with good intentions.'

On Tuesday, April 18, he and I were engaged to go with Sir Joshua Reynolds to dine with Mr [Richard Owen] Cambridge, at his beautiful villa on the banks of the Thames, near Twickenham. Dr Johnson's tardiness was such, that Sir Joshua, who had an appointment at Richmond, early in the day, was obliged to go by himself on horseback, leaving his coach to Johnson and me. Johnson was in such good spirits, that every thing seemed to please him as we drove along.

Our conversation turned on a variety of subjects. He thought portrait-painting an improper employment for a woman. 'Publick practice of any art, (he observed,) and staring in men's faces, is very indelicate in a female.' I happened to start a question of propriety, whether, when a man knows that some of his intimate friends are invited to the house of another friend, with whom they are all equally intimate, he may join them without an invitation. JOHNSON. No, Sir; he is not to go when he is not invited. They may be invited on purpose to abuse him' (smiling).

As a curious instance how little a man knows, or wishes to know, his own character in the world, or, rather, as a convincing proof that Johnson's roughness was only external, and did not proceed from his heart, I insert the following dialogue. JOHNSON. 'It is wonderful, Sir, how rare a quality good humour is in life. We meet with very few good humoured men.' I mentioned four of our friends, [Reynolds, Burke, Langton, and Beauclerk] none of whom he would

allow to be good humoured. One was *acid* [Beauclerk], another was *muddy* [Langton], and to the others he had objections which have escaped me. Then, shaking his head and stretching himself at his ease in the coach, and smiling with much complacency, he turned to me and said, 'I look upon *myself* as a good humoured fellow.' The epithet *fellow*, applied to the great Lexicographer, the stately Moralist, the masterly Critick, as if he had been *Sat.* Johnson, a mere pleasant companion, was highly diverting; and this light notion of himself struck me with wonder. I answered, also smiling, 'No, no, Sir; that will *not* do. You are good natured, but not good humoured: you are irascible. You have not patience with folly and absurdity. I believe you would pardon them, if there were time to deprecate your vengeance; but punishment follows so quick after sentence, that they cannot escape.'

He defended his remark upon the general insufficiency of education in Scotland; and confirmed to me the authenticity of his witty saying on the learning of the Scotch; - 'Their learning is like bread in a besieged town: every man gets a little, but no man gets a full meal.'

He talked of Isaac Walton's *Lives*, which was one of his most favourite books. Dr Donne's *Life*, he said, was the most perfect of them. He observed, that 'it was wonderful that Walton, who was in a very low situation in life, should have been familiarly received by so many great men, and that at a time when the ranks of society were kept more separate than they are now.' He supposed that Walton had then given up his business as a linendraper and sempster, and was only an authour; and added, 'that he was a great panegyrist.' BOSWELL. 'No quality will get a man more friends than a disposition to admire the qualities of others. I do not mean flattery, but a sincere admiration.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, flattery pleases very generally. In the first place, the flatterer may think what he says to be true: but, in the second place, whether he thinks so or not, he certainly *thinks* those whom he flatters of consequence enough to be flattered.'

No sooner had we made our bow to Mr Cambridge, in his

library, than Johnson ran eagerly to one side of the room, intent on poring over the backs of the books. Sir Joshua observed, (aside,) 'He runs to the books, as I do to the pictures : but I have the advantage. I can see much more of the pictures than he can of the books.' Mr Cambridge, upon this, politely said, 'Dr Johnson, I am going, with your pardon, to accuse myself, for I have the same custom which I perceive you have. But it seems odd that one should have such a desire to look at the backs of books.' Johnson, ever ready for contest, instantly started from his reverie, wheeled about, and answered, 'Sir, the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we enquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it. This leads us to look at catalogues, and at the backs of books in libraries.' Sir Joshua observed to me the extraordinary promptitude with which Johnson flew upon an argument. 'Yes, (said I,) he has no formal preparation, no flourishing with his sword; he is through your body in an instant.'

The Beggar's Opera, and the common question, whether it was pernicious in its effects, having been introduced; — JOHNSON. 'As to this matter, which has been very much contested, I myself am of opinion, that more influence has been ascribed to *The Beggar's Opera*, than it in reality ever had; for I do not believe that any man was ever made a rogue by being present at its representation. At the same time I do not deny that it may have some influence, by making the character of a rogue familiar, and in some degree pleasing.' Then collecting himself as it were, to give a heavy stroke: 'There is in it such a *labefactation* of all principles, as may be injurious to morality.'

The late 'worthy' Duke of Queensberry, as Thomson, in his *Seasons*, justly characterises him, told me, that when Gay first shewed him *The Beggar's Opera*, his Grace's observation was, 'This is a very odd thing, Gay; I am satisfied that it is either a very good thing, or a very bad thing.' It proved

the former, beyond the warmest expectations of the authour or his friends.

We talked of a young gentleman's [Richard Brinsley Sheridan] marriage with an eminent singer, [Elizabeth Linley] and his determination that she should no longer sing in publick, though his father was very earnest she should, because her talents would be liberally rewarded, so as to make her a good fortune. It was questioned whether the young gentleman, who had not a shilling in the world, but was blest with very uncommon talents, was not foolishly delicate, or foolishly proud, and his father truly rational without being mean. Johnson, with all the high spirit of a Roman senator, exclaimed, 'He resolved wisely and nobly to be sure. He is a brave man. Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife singing publickly for hire? No, Sir, there can be no doubt here. I know not if I should not *prepare* myself for a publick singer, as readily as let my wife be one.'

Johnson arraigned the modern politicks of this country, as entirely devoid of all principle of whatever kind. 'Politicks (said he,) are now nothing more than means of rising in the world. With this sole view do men engage in politicks, and their whole conduct proceeds upon it. How different in that respect is the state of the nation now from what it was in the time of Charles the First, during the Usurpation, and after the Restoration, in the time of Charles the Second.'

On Friday, May 12, as he had been so good as to assign me a room in his house, where I might sleep occasionally, when I happened to sit with him to a late hour, I took possession of it this night, found every thing in excellent order, and was attended by honest Francis with a most civil assiduity. I asked Johnson whether I might go to a consultation with another lawyer upon Sunday, as that appeared to me to be doing work as much in my way, as if an artisan should work on the day appropriated for religious rest. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, when you are of consequence enough to oppose the practice of consulting upon Sunday, you should do it: but you may go now. It is not criminal, though it is not what one

should do, who is anxious for the preservation and increase of piety, to which a peculiar observance of Sunday is a great help. The distinction is clear between what is of moral and what is of ritual obligation.'

On Saturday, May 13, I breakfasted with him by invitation, accompanied by Mr Andrew Crosbie, a Scotch Advocate, whom he had seen at Edinburgh, and the Hon. Colonel (now General) Edward Stopford, brother to Lord Courtown, who was desirous of being introduced to him. His tea and rolls and butter, and whole breakfast apparatus were all in such decorum, and his behaviour was so courteous, that Colonel Stopford was quite surprized, and wondered at his having heard so much said of Johnson's slovenliness and roughness.

I passed many hours with him on the 17th, of which I find all my memorial is, 'much laughing.' It should seem he had that day been in a humour for jocularly and merriment, and upon such occasions I never knew a man laugh more heartily. We may suppose, that the high relish of a state so different from his habitual gloom, produced more than ordinary exertions of that distinguishing faculty of man, which has puzzled philosophers so much to explain. Johnson's laugh was as remarkable as any circumstance in his manner. It was a kind of good humoured growl. Tom Davies described it drolly enough: 'He laughs like a rhinoceros.'

TO JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

TO THE SAME

'MY DEAR SIR, — I now write to you, lest in some of your freaks and humours you should fancy yourself neglected. Such fancies I must entreat you never to admit, at least never to indulge: for my regard for you is so radicated and fixed, that it is become part of my mind, and cannot be effaced but by some cause uncommonly violent; therefore, whether I write or not, set your thoughts at rest. I now write to tell you that I shall not very soon write again, for I am to set out tomorrow on another journey. . . .

Your friends are all well at Streatham, and in Leicester-

fields.⁹ Make my compliments to Mrs Boswell, if she is in good humour with me. I am, Sir, &c.

'September 14, 1775.'

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

What he mentions in such light terms as, 'I am to set out to-morrow on another journey,' I soon afterwards discovered was no less than a tour to France with Mr and Mrs Thrale. This was the only time in his life that he went upon the Continent.

When I met him in London the following year, the account which he gave me of his French tour, was, 'Sir, I have seen all the visibilities of Paris, and around it; but to have formed an acquaintance with the people there, would have required more time than I could stay. I was just beginning to creep into acquaintance by means of Colonel [Jean] Drumgold, a very high man, Sir, head of *L'Ecole Militaire*, a most complete character, for he had first been a professor of rhetorick, and then became a soldier. And, Sir, I was very kindly treated by the English Benedictines, and have a cell appropriated to me in their convent.'

He observed, 'The great in France live very magnificently, but the rest very miserably. There is no happy middle state as in England. The shops of Paris are mean; the meat in the markets is such as would be sent to a gaol in England: and Mr Thrale justly observed, that the cookery of the French was forced upon them by necessity; for they could not eat their meat, unless they added some taste to it. The French are an indelicate people; they will spit upon any place. At Madame ——'s, [Madame du Boccage]¹⁰ a literary lady of rank, the footman took the sugar in his fingers, and threw it into my coffee. I was going to put it aside; but hearing it was made on purpose for me, I e'en tasted Tom's fingers. The same lady would needs make tea *à l'Angloise*. The spout of the tea-pot did not pour freely; she bade the footman blow into it. France is worse than Scotland in every thing but climate. Nature has done more for the French; but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done.'

It happened that Foote was at Paris at the same time with Dr Johnson, and his description of my friend while there, was abundantly ludicrous. He told me, that the French were quite astonished at his figure and manner, and at his dress, which he obstinately continued exactly as in London; – his brown clothes, black stockings, and plain shirt.

While Johnson was in France, he was generally very resolute in speaking Latin. It was a maxim with him that a man should not let himself down, by speaking a language which he speaks imperfectly. Indeed, we must have often observed how inferior, how much like a child a man appears, who speaks a broken tongue. When Sir Joshua Reynolds, at one of the dinners of the Royal Academy, presented him to a Frenchman [perhaps the French Ambassador] of great distinction, he would not deign to speak French, but talked Latin, though his Excellency did not understand it, owing, perhaps, to Johnson's English pronunciation: yet upon another occasion he was observed to speak French to a Frenchman of high rank, who spoke English; and being asked the reason, with some expression of surprise, – he answered, 'because I think my French is as good as his English.' Though Johnson understood French perfectly, he could not speak it readily, as I have observed at his first interview with General Paoli, in 1769; yet he wrote it, I imagine, pretty well, as appears from some of his letters in Mrs Piozzi's collection.

Here let me not forget a curious anecdote, as related to me by Mr Beauclerk. 'When Madame de Boufflers was first in England, (said Beauclerk,) she was desirous to see Johnson. I accordingly went with her to his chambers in the Temple, where she was entertained with his conversation for some time. When our visit was over, she and I left him, and were got into Inner Temple-lane, when all at once I heard a noise like thunder. This was occasioned by Johnson, who it seems, upon a little recollection, had taken it into his head that he ought to have done the honours of his literary residence to a foreign lady of quality, and eager to show himself a man of gallantry, was hurrying down the stair-case in violent agitation. He overtook us before we reached the Temple-

gate, and brushing in between me and Madame de Boufflers, seized her hand, and conducted her to her coach. His dress was a rusty brown morning suit, a pair of old shoes by way of slippers, a little shrivelled wig sticking on top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. A considerable crowd of people gathered round, and were not a little struck by this singular appearance.'

He spoke Latin with wonderful fluency and elegance. When Père Boscovich [the mathematician and philosopher] was in England, Johnson dined in company with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, and at Dr Douglas's, now Bishop of Salisbury. Upon both occasions that celebrated foreigner expressed his astonishment at Johnson's Latin conversation.

In the course of this year Dr Burney informs me, that 'he very frequently met Dr Johnson at Mr Thrale's, at Streatham, where they had many long conversations, often sitting up as long as the fire and candles lasted, and much longer than the patience of the servants subsisted.'

A few of Johnson's sayings, which that gentleman recollects, shall here be inserted.

'I never take a nap after dinner but when I have had a bad night, and then the nap takes me.'

'The writer of an epitaph should not be considered as saying nothing but what is strictly true. Allowance must be made for some degree of exaggerated praise. In lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath.'

'There is now less flogging in our great schools than formerly, but then less is learned there; so that what the boys get at one end, they lose at the other.'

'After having talked slightly of musick, he was observed to listen very attentively while Miss Thrale played on the harpsichord, and with eagerness he called to her, "Why don't you dash away like Burney?" Dr Burney upon this said to him, "I believe, Sir, we shall make a musician of you at last." Johnson with candid complacency replied, "Sir, I shall be glad to have a new sense given to me."'

'He had come down one morning to the breakfast-room, and been a considerable time by himself before any body ap-

peared. When, on a subsequent day, he was twitted by Mrs Thrale for being very late, which he generally was, he defended himself by alluding to the extraordinary morning, when he had been too early, "Madam, I do not like to come down to *vacuity*."'

'Dr Burney having remarked that Mr Garrick was beginning to look old, he said, "Why, Sir, you are not to wonder at that; no man's face has had more wear and tear."'

PART VI

1776

1776 : ÆTAT. 67.] – In 1776, Johnson wrote, so far as I can discover, nothing for the publick : but that his mind was still ardent, and fraught with generous wishes to attain to still higher degrees of literary excellence, is proved by his private notes of this year, which I shall insert in their proper place.

Having arrived in London late on Friday, the 15th of March, I hastened next morning to wait on Dr Johnson, at his house; but found he was removed from Johnson's-court, No. 7, to Bolt-court, No. 8, still keeping to his favourite Fleet-street. My reflection at the time upon this change as marked in my Journal, is as follows : 'I felt a foolish regret that he had left a court which bore his name; but it was not foolish to be affected with some tenderness of regard for a place in which I had seen him a great deal, from whence I had often issued a better and a happier man than when I went in.' Being informed that he was at Mr Thrale's, in the Borough, I hastened thither, and found Mrs Thrale and him at breakfast. I was kindly welcomed. In a moment he was in full glow of conversation, and I felt myself elevated as if brought into another state of being. Mrs Thrale and I looked at each other while he talked, and our looks expressed our congenial admiration and affection for him. I shall ever recollect this scene with great pleasure. I exclaimed to her, 'I am now, intellectually, quite restored by him, by transfusion of *mind*.' 'There are many (she replied) who admire and respect Mr Johnson; but you and I *love* him.'

He seemed very happy in the near prospect of going to Italy with Mr and Mrs Thrale. 'But, (said he,) before leaving England I am to take a jaunt to Oxford, Birmingham, my native city Lichfield, and my old friend, Dr Taylor's, at Ashbourn, in Derbyshire. I shall go in a few days, and you, Bos-

well, shall go with me.' I was ready to accompany him; being willing even to leave London to have the pleasure of his conversation.

I mentioned Dr Adam Smith's book on *The Wealth of Nations*, which was just published, and that Sir John Pringle had observed to me, that Dr Smith, who had never been in trade, could not be expected to write well on that subject any more than a lawyer upon physick. JOHNSON. 'He is mistaken, Sir: a man who has never been engaged in trade himself may undoubtedly write well upon trade, and there is nothing which requires more to be illustrated by philosophy than trade does. To write a good book upon it, a man must have extensive views. It is not necessary to have practised, to write well upon a subject.'

The importance of strict and scrupulous veracity cannot be too often inculcated. Johnson was known to be so rigidly attentive to it, that even in his common conversation the slightest circumstance was mentioned with exact precision. The knowledge of his having such a principle and habit made his friends have a perfect reliance on the truth of every thing that he told, however it might have been doubted if told by many others. As an instance of this, I may mention an odd incident which he related as having happened to him one night in Fleet-street. 'A gentlewoman (said he) begged I would give her my arm to assist her in crossing the street, which I accordingly did; upon which she offered me a shilling, supposing me to be the watchman. I perceived that she was somewhat in liquor.' This, if told by most people, would have been thought an invention; when told by Johnson, it was believed by his friends as much as if they had seen what passed.

We landed at the Temple-stairs, where we parted.

I found him in the evening in Mrs Williams's rooms. We talked of religious orders. He said, 'It is as unreasonable for a man to go into a Carthusian convent for fear of being immoral, as for a man to cut off his hands for fear he should steal. There is, indeed, great resolution in the immediate act of dismembering himself; but when that is once done, he has

no longer any merit : for though it is out of his power to steal, yet he may all his life be a thief in his heart. So when a man has once become a Carthusian, he is obliged to continue so, whether he chooses it or not. Their silence, too, is absurd. We read in the Gospel of the apostles being sent to preach, but not to hold their tongues. All severity that does not tend to increase good, or prevent evil, is idle. I said to the Lady Abbess of a convent, "Madam, you are here, not for the love of virtue, but the fear of vice." She said, "She should remember this as long as she lived." "

Finding him still persevering in his abstinence from wine, I ventured to speak to him of it. — JOHNSON. 'Sir, I have no objection to a man's drinking wine, if he can do it in moderation. I found myself apt to go to excess in it, and therefore, after having been for some time without it, on account of illness, I thought it better not to return to it.'

Though he often enlarged upon the evil of intoxication, he was by no means harsh and unforgiving to those who indulged in occasional excess in wine. One of his friends [Boswell himself] I well remember, came to sup at a tavern with him and some other gentlemen, and too plainly discovered that he had drunk too much at dinner. When one who loved mischief, [George Colman, the dramatist] thinking to produce a severe censure, asked Johnson, a few days afterwards, 'Well, Sir, what did your friend say to you, as an apology for being in such a situation?' Johnson answered, 'Sir, he said all that a man *should* say : he said he was sorry for it.'

I heard him once give a very judicious practical advice upon this subject : 'A man, who has been drinking wine at all freely, should never go into a new company. With those who have partaken of wine with him, he may be pretty well in unison; but he will probably be offensive, or appear ridiculous, to other people.'

On Tuesday, March 19, which was fixed for our proposed jaunt, we met in the morning at the Somerset coffee-house in the Strand, where we were taken up by the Oxford coach. He was accompanied by Mr [John] Gwyn, the architect; and a gentleman of Merton College, whom we did not know, had

the fourth seat. We soon got into conversation; for it was very remarkable of Johnson, that the presence of a stranger was no restraint upon his talk. I observed that Garrick, who was about to quit the stage, would soon have an easier life. JOHNSON. 'I doubt that, Sir.' BOSWELL. 'Why, Sir, he will be Atlas with the burthen off his back.' JOHNSON. 'But I know not, Sir, if he will be so steady without his load. However, he should never play any more, but be entirely the gentleman, and not partly the player: he should no longer subject himself to be hissed by a mob, or to be insolently treated by performers, whom he used to rule with a high hand, and who would gladly retaliate.' BOSWELL. 'I think he should play once a year for the benefit of decayed actors, as it has been said he means to do.' JOHNSON. 'Alas, Sir! he will soon be a decayed actor himself.'

Johnson expressed his disapprobation of ornamental architecture, such as magnificent columns supporting a portico, or expensive pilasters supporting merely their own capitals, 'because it consumes labour disproportionate to its utility.' For the same reason he satyrised statuary. 'Painting (said he) consumes labour not disproportionate to its effect; but a fellow will hack half a year at a block of marble to make something in stone that hardly resembles a man. The value of statuary is owing to its difficulty. You would not value the finest head cut upon a carrot.'

I mentioned Mr Burke. JOHNSON. 'Yes; Burke is an extraordinary man. His stream of mind is perpetual.' It is very pleasing to me to record, that Johnson's high estimation of the talents of this gentleman was uniform from their early acquaintance. Sir Joshua Reynolds informs me, that when Mr Burke was first elected a member of Parliament, and Sir John Hawkins expressed a wonder at his attaining a seat, Johnson said, 'Now we who know Burke, know, that he will be one of the first men in this country.' And once, when Johnson was ill, and unable to exert himself as much as usual without fatigue, Mr Burke having been mentioned, he said, 'That fellow calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now, it would kill me.' So much was he accustomed to con-

sider conversation as a contest, and such was his notion of Burke as an opponent.

Next morning, Thursday, March 21, we set out in a post-chaise to pursue our ramble. It was a delightful day, and we drove through Blenheim park.

We dined at an excellent inn at Chapel-house, where he expatiated on the felicity of England in its taverns and inns, and triumphed over the French for not having, in any perfection, the tavern life. 'There is no private house, (said he,) in which people can enjoy themselves so well, as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that every body should be easy; in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him: and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house, as if it were his own. Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome: and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, Sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.'¹

On Friday, March 22, having set out early from Henley, where we had lain the preceding night, we arrived at Birmingham about nine o'clock, and, after breakfast, went to call on his old schoolfellow Mr Hector. A very stupid maid, who opened the door, told us, that 'her master was gone out; he was gone to the country; she could not tell when he would return.' In short, she gave us a miserable reception, and Johnson observed, 'She would have behaved no better to people who wanted him in the way of his profession.' He said to her, 'My name is Johnson; tell him I called. Will you remember the name?' She answered with rustick simplicity, in

the Warwickshire pronunciation, 'I don't understand you, Sir.' – 'Blockhead, (said he,) I'll write.' I never heard the word *blockhead* applied to a woman before, though I do not see why it should not, when there is evident occasion for it. He, however, made another attempt to make her understand him, and roared loud in her ear, '*Johnson*,' and then she caught the sound.

Mr [Sampson] Lloyd² joined us in the street; and in a little while we met *Friend Hector*, as Mr Lloyd called him. It gave me pleasure to observe the joy which Johnson and he expressed on seeing each other again. Mr Lloyd and I left them together, while he obligingly shewed me some of the manufactures of this very curious assemblage of artificers. We all met at dinner at Mr Lloyd's, where we were entertained with great hospitality. Mr and Mrs Lloyd had been married the same year with their Majesties, and, like them, had been blessed with a numerous family of fine children, their numbers being exactly the same. Johnson said, 'Marriage is the best state for a man in general; and every man is a worse man, in proportion as he is unfit for the married state.'

I have always loved the simplicity of manners, and the spiritual-mindedness of the Quakers; and talking with Mr Lloyd, I observed, that the essential part of religion was piety, a devout intercourse with the Divinity; and that many a man was a Quaker without knowing it.

Dr Johnson had said to me in the morning, while we walked together, that he liked individuals among the Quakers, but not the sect.

Dr Johnson said to me, 'You will see, Sir, at Mr Hector's, his sister, Mrs Careless [Ann Carless], a clergyman's widow. She was the first woman with whom I was in love. It dropt out of my head imperceptibly; but she and I shall always have a kindness for each other.' He laughed at the notion that a man never can be really in love but once, and considered it a mere romantick fancy.

On our return from Mr Bolton's, Mr Hector took me to his house, where we found Johnson sitting placidly at tea, with

his *first love*; who, though now advanced in years, was a genteel woman, very agreeable, and well-bred.

When he again talked of Mrs Careless to-night, he seemed to have had his affection revived; for he said, 'If I had married her, it might have been as happy for me.' BOSWELL. 'Pray, Sir, do you not suppose that there are fifty women in the world, with any one of whom a man may be as happy, as with any one woman in particular?' JOHNSON. 'Ay, Sir, fifty thousand.' BOSWELL. 'Then, Sir, you are not of opinion with some who imagine that certain men and women are made for each other; and that they cannot be happy if they miss their counterparts?' JOHNSON. 'To be sure not, Sir. I believe marriages would in general be as happy, and often more so, if they were all made by the Lord Chancellor, upon a due consideration of characters and circumstances, without the parties having any choice in the matter.'

I wished to have staid at Birmingham to-night, to have talked more with Mr Hector; but my friend was impatient to reach his native city; so we drove on that stage in the dark, and were long pensive and silent. When we came within the focus of the Lichfield lamps, 'Now (said he,) we are getting out of a state of death.' We put up at the Three Crowns, not one of the great inns, but a good old fashioned one, which was kept by Mr Wilkins, and was the very next house to that in which Johnson was born and brought up, and which was still his own property.³

Next morning he introduced me to Mrs Lucy Porter, his step-daughter. She was now an old maid, with much simplicity of manner. She had never been in London. Her brother, a Captain in the navy, had left her a fortune of ten thousand pounds; about a third of which she had laid out in building a stately house, and making a handsome garden, in an elevated situation in Lichfield. Johnson, when here by himself, used to live at her house. She revered him, and he had a parental tenderness for her.

We then visited Mr Peter Garrick, who had that morning received a letter from his brother David, announcing our coming to Lichfield. He was engaged to dinner, but asked us

to tea, and to sleep at his house. Johnson, however, would not quit his old acquaintance Wilkins, of the Three Crowns. The family likeness of the Garricks was very striking; and Johnson thought that David's vivacity was not so peculiar to himself as was supposed. 'Sir, (said he,) I don't know but if Peter had cultivated all the arts of gaiety as much as David has done, he might have been as brisk and lively. Depend upon it, Sir, vivacity is much an art, and depends greatly on habit.'

We dined at our inn, and had with us a Mr [Harry] Jackson, one of Johnson's schoolfellows, whom he treated with much kindness, though he seemed to be a low man, dull and untaught. He had a coarse grey coat, black waistcoat, greasy leather breeches, and a yellow uncurled wig; and his countenance had the ruddiness which betokens one who is in no haste to 'leave his can.' He drank only ale. He had tried to be a cutler at Birmingham, but had not succeeded; and now he lived poorly at home, and had some scheme of dressing leather in a better manner than common; to his indistinct account of which, Dr Johnson listened with patient attention, that he might assist him with his advice. Here was an instance of genuine humanity and real kindness in this great man, who has been most unjustly represented as altogether harsh and destitute of tenderness. A thousand such instances might have been recorded in the course of his long life; though, that his temper was warm and hasty, and his manner often rough, cannot be denied.

I saw here, for the first time, *oat ale*; and oat cakes not hard as in Scotland, but soft like a Yorkshire cake, were served at breakfast. It was pleasant to me to find, that *Oats*, the *food of horses*, were so much used as the *food of the people* in Dr Johnson's own town. He expatiated in praise of Lichfield and its inhabitants, who, he said, were 'the most sober, decent people in England, the genteeldest in proportion to their wealth, and spoke the purest English.' I doubted as to the last article of this eulogy: for they had several provincial sounds; as, *there*, pronounced like *fear*, instead of like *fair*; *once* pronounced *woonse*, instead of *wunse*, or

wonse. Johnson himself never got entirely free of those provincial accents. Garrick sometimes used to take him off, squeezing a lemon into a punch-bowl, with uncouth gesticulations, looking round the company, and calling out, 'Who's for *poonsh*?'

Very little business appeared to be going forward in Lichfield. I found however two strange manufactures forso inland a place, sail-cloth and streamers for ships; and I observed them making some saddle-cloths, and dressing sheepskins: but upon the whole, the busy hand of industry seemed to be quite slackened. 'Surely, Sir, (said I,) you are an idle set of people.' 'Sir, (said Johnson,) we are a city of philosophers: we work with our heads, and make the boobies of Birmingham work for us with their hands.'

We went and viewed the museum of Mr Richard Green, apothecary here, who told me he was proud of being a relation of Dr Johnson's. It was, truly, a wonderful collection, both of antiquities and natural curiosities, and ingenious works of art. He had all the articles accurately arranged, with their names upon labels, printed at his own little press; and on the staircase leading to it was a board, with the names of contributors marked in gold letters. A printed catalogue of the collection was to be had at a bookseller's. Johnson expressed his admiration of the activity and diligence and good fortune of Mr Green, in getting together, in his situation, so great a variety of things; and Mr Green told me that Johnson once said to him, 'Sir, I should as soon have thought of building a man of war, as of collecting such a museum.'

On Monday, March 25, we breakfasted at Mrs Lucy Porter's. Johnson had sent an express to Dr Taylor's, acquainting him of our being at Lichfield, and Taylor had returned an answer that his postchaise should come for us this day. While we sat at breakfast, Dr Johnson received a letter by the post, which seemed to agitate him very much. When he had read it, he exclaimed, 'One of the most dreadful things that has happened in my time.' The phrase *my time*, like the word *age*, is usually understood to refer to an event of a publick or general nature. I imagined something like an

assassination of the King – like a gunpowder plot carried into execution – or like another fire of London. When asked, 'What is it, Sir?' he answered, 'Mr Thrale has lost his only son!' This was, no doubt, a very great affliction to Mr and Mrs Thrale, which their friends would consider accordingly; but from the manner in which the intelligence of it was communicated by Johnson, it appeared for the moment to be comparatively small. I, however, soon felt a sincere concern, and was curious to observe, how Dr Johnson would be affected. He said, 'This is a total extinction to their family, as much as if they were sold into captivity.' Upon my mentioning that Mr Thrale had daughters, who might inherit his wealth; – 'Daughters, (said Johnson, warmly,) he'll no more value his daughters than –' I was going to speak. – 'Sir, (said he,) don't you know how you yourself think? Sir, he wishes to propagate his name.' In short, I saw male succession strong in his mind, even where there was no name, no family of any long standing. I said, it was lucky he was not present when this misfortune happened. JOHNSON. 'It is lucky for *me*. People in distress never think that you feel enough.' BOSWELL. 'And Sir, they will have the hope of seeing you, which will be a relief in the meantime; and when you get to them, the pain will be so far abated, that they will be capable of being consoled by you, which, in the first violence of it, I believe, would not be the case.' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir; violent pain of mind, like violent pain of body, *must* be severely felt.' BOSWELL. 'I own, Sir, I have not so much feeling for the distress of others, as some people have, or pretend to have: but I know this, that I would do all in my power to relieve them.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is affectation to pretend to feel the distress of others, as much as they do themselves. It is equally so, as if one should pretend to feel as much pain while a friend's leg is cutting off, as he does. No, Sir; you have expressed the rational and just nature of sympathy. I would have gone to the extremity of the earth to have preserved this boy.'

He was soon quite calm. The letter was from Mr Thrale's clerk, and concluded, 'I need not say how much they wish to

see you in London.' He said, 'We shall hasten back from Taylor's.'

Mrs Lucy Porter and some other ladies of the place talked a great deal of him when he was out of the room, not only with veneration but affection. It pleased me to find that he was so much *beloved* in his native city.

In the evening we went to the Town-hall, which was converted into a temporary theatre, and saw *Theodosius*, with *The Stratford Jubilee*. I was happy to see Dr Johnson sitting in a conspicuous part of the pit, and receiving affectionate homage from all his acquaintance. We were quite gay and merry. I afterwards mentioned to him that I condemned myself for being so, when poor Mr and Mrs Thrale were in such distress. JOHNSON. 'You are wrong, Sir; twenty years hence Mr and Mrs Thrale will not suffer much pain from the death of their son. Now, Sir, you are to consider, that distance of place, as well as distance of time, operates upon the human feelings. I would not have you be gay in the presence of the distressed, because it would shock them; but you may be gay at a distance. Pain for the loss of a friend, or of a relation whom we love, is occasioned by the want which we feel. In time the vacuity is filled with something else; or, sometimes the vacuity closes up of itself.'

Here I shall record some fragments of my friend's conversation during this jaunt.

'Never speak of a man in his own presence. It is always indelicate, and may be offensive.'

'Questioning is not the mode of conversation among gentlemen. It is assuming a superiority, and it is particularly wrong to question a man concerning himself. There may be parts of his former life which he may not wish to be made known to other persons, or even brought to his own recollection.'

'A man should be careful never to tell tales of himself to his own disadvantage. People may be amused and laugh at the time, but they will be remembered, and brought out against him upon some subsequent occasion.'

On Tuesday, March 26, there came for us an equipage

properly suited to a wealthy well-beneficed clergyman; – Dr Taylor's large roomy post-chaise, drawn by four stout plump horses, and driven by two steady jolly postillions, which conveyed us to Ashbourne; where I found my friend's school-fellow living upon an establishment perfectly corresponding with his substantial creditable equipage: his house, garden, pleasure-grounds, table, in short every thing good, and no scantiness appearing.

Dr Johnson and Dr Taylor met with great cordiality.

Dr Taylor commended a physician [Dr William Butter] who was known to him and Dr Johnson, and said, 'I fight many battles for him, as many people in the country dislike him.' JOHNSON. 'But you should consider, Sir, that by every one of your victories he is a loser; for, every man of whom you get the better, will be very angry, and will resolve not to employ him; whereas if people get the better of you in argument about him, they'll think, "We'll send for Dr [Butter] nevertheless."' This was an observation deep and sure in human nature.

At Leicester we read in the newspaper that Dr [Robert] James was dead. I thought that the death of an old school-fellow, and one with whom he had lived a good deal in London, would have affected my fellow-traveller much: but he only said, 'Ah! poor Jamy.'⁴ Afterwards, however, when we were in the chaise, he said, with more tenderness, 'Since I set out on this jaunt, I have lost an old friend and a young one; – Dr James, and poor Harry,' (meaning Mr Thrale's son.)

We stopped at Messieurs Dillys, booksellers in the Poultry; from whence he hurried away, in a hackney coach, to Mr Thrale's, in the Borough. I called at his house in the evening, having promised to acquaint Mrs Williams of his safe return; when, to my surprize, I found him sitting with her at tea, and, as I thought, not in a very good humour: for, it seems, when he had got to Mr Thrale's, he found the coach was at the door waiting to carry Mrs and Miss Thrale, and Signor Baretti, their Italian master, to Bath. This was not shewing the attention which might have been expected to the 'Guide, Philosopher, and Friend,' the *Imlac*⁵ who had

hastened from the country to console a distressed mother, who he understood was very anxious for his return. They had, I found, without ceremony, proceeded on their intended journey. I was glad to understand from him that it was still resolved that his tour to Italy with Mr and Mrs Thrale should take place, of which he had entertained some doubt, on account of the loss which they had suffered; and his doubts afterwards proved to be well-founded.

On Wednesday, April 3, in the morning I found him very busy putting his books in order, and as they were generally very old ones, clouds of dust were flying around him. He had on a pair of large gloves, such as hedgers use. His present appearance put me in mind of my uncle, Dr [John] Boswell's description of him, 'A robust genius, born to grapple with whole libraries.'

He had been in company with Omai, a native of one of the South Sea Islands, after he had been some time in this country. He was struck with the elegance of his behaviour, and accounted for it thus: 'Sir, he had passed his time, while in England, only in the best company; so that all that he had acquired of our manners was genteel. As a proof of this, Sir, Lord Mulgrave and he dined one day at Streatham; they sat with their backs to the light fronting me, so that I could not see distinctly; and there was so little of the savage in Omai, that I was afraid to speak to either, lest I should mistake one for the other.'

We agreed to dine to-day at the Mitre-tavern. I brought with me Mr [Alexander] Murray, Solicitor-General of Scotland.

Mr Murray praised the ancient philosophers for the candour and good humour with which those of different sects disputed with each other. JOHNSON. 'Sir, they disputed with good humour, because they were not in earnest as to religion. They disputed with good humour upon their fanciful theories, because they were not interested in the truth of them: when a man has nothing to lose, he may be in good humour with his opponent. Being angry with one who controverts an opinion which you value, is a necessary conse-

quence of the uneasiness which you feel. Every man who attacks my belief, diminishes in some degree my confidence in it, and therefore makes me uneasy; and I am angry with him who makes me uneasy.' MURRAY. 'It seems to me that we are not angry at a man for controverting an opinion which we believe and value; we rather pity him.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir; to be sure when you wish a man to have that belief which you think is of infinite advantage, you wish well to him; but your primary consideration is your own quiet. If a madman were to come into this room with a stick in his hand, no doubt we should pity the state of his mind; but our primary consideration would be to take care of ourselves. We should knock him down first, and pity him afterwards. No, Sir; every man will dispute with great good humour upon a subject in which he is not interested. I will dispute very calmly upon the probability of another man's son being hanged; but if a man zealously enforces the probability that my own son will be hanged, I shall certainly not be in a very good humour with him.' MURRAY. 'But, Sir, truth will always bear an examination.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, but it is painful to be forced to defend it. Consider, Sir, how should you like, though conscious of your innocence, to be tried before a jury for a capital crime, once a week.'

Mr Thrale called upon him, and appeared to bear the loss of his son with a manly composure. There was no affectation about him; and he talked, as usual, upon indifferent subjects. He seemed to me to hesitate as to the intended Italian tour, on which, I flattered myself, he and Mrs Thrale and Dr Johnson were soon to set out; and, therefore, I pressed it as much as I could.

When I expressed an earnest wish for his remarks on Italy, he said, 'I do not see that I could make a book upon Italy; yet I should be glad to get two hundred pounds, or five hundred pounds, by such a work.' This shewed both that a journal of his Tour upon the Continent was not wholly out of his contemplation, and that he uniformly adhered to that strange opinion, which his indolent disposition made him

utter: 'No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.'

I mentioned a new gaming-club, of which Mr Beauclerk had given me an account, where the members played to a desperate extent. JOHNSON. 'Depend upon it, Sir, this is mere talk. *Who* is ruined by gaming? You will not find six instances in an age. There is a strange rout made about deep play: whereas you have many more people ruined by adventurous trade, and yet we do not hear such an outcry against it.' THRALE. 'There may be few people absolutely ruined by deep play; but very many are much hurt in their circumstances by it.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, and so are very many by other kinds of expence.' I had heard him talk once before in the same manner; and at Oxford he said, 'he wished he had learnt to play at cards.' The truth, however, is, that he loved to display his ingenuity in argument; and therefore would sometimes in conversation maintain opinions which he was sensible were wrong, but in supporting which, his reasoning and wit would be most conspicuous. He would begin thus: 'Why, Sir, as to the good or evil of card-playing -' Now, (said Garrick,) he is thinking which side he shall take.' He appeared to have a pleasure in contradiction, especially when any opinion whatever was delivered with an air of confidence.

On Sunday, April 7, Easter-day, after having been at St Paul's cathedral, I came to Dr Johnson, according to my usual custom. It seemed to me, that there was always something peculiarly mild and placid in his manner upon this holy festival.

I repeated to him an argument of a lady [perhaps Jane, Countess of Eglinton] of my acquaintance, who maintained, that her husband's having been found guilty of numberless infidelities, released her from conjugal obligations, because they were reciprocal. JOHNSON. 'This is miserable stuff, Sir. To the contract of marriage, besides the man and wife, there is a third party - Society; and, if it be considered as a vow - God: and, therefore, it cannot be dissolved by their con-

sent alone. Laws are not made for particular cases, but for men in general. A woman may be unhappy with her husband; but she cannot be freed from him without the approbation of the civil and ecclesiastical power. A man may be unhappy, because he is not so rich as another; but he is not to seize upon another's property with his own hand.' BOSWELL. 'But, Sir, this lady does not want that the contract should be dissolved; she only argues that she may indulge herself in gallantries with equal freedom as her husband does, provided she takes care not to introduce a spurious issue into his family.' JOHNSON. 'This lady of yours, Sir, I think, is very fit for a brothel.'

Mrs Williams was very peevish; and I wondered at Johnson's patience with her now, as I had often done on similar occasions. The truth is, that his humane consideration of the forlorn and indigent state in which this lady was left by her father, induced him to treat her with the utmost tenderness, and even to be desirous of procuring her amusement, so as sometimes to incommode many of his friends, by carrying her with him to their houses, where, from her manner of eating, in consequence of her blindness, she could not but offend the delicacy of persons of nice sensations.

After coffee, we went to afternoon service in St Clement's church. Observing some beggars in the street as we walked along, I said to him I supposed there was no civilised country in the world, where the misery of want in the lowest classes of the people was prevented. JOHNSON. 'I believe, Sir, there is not; but it is better that some should be unhappy, than that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality.'

On Wednesday, April 10, I dined with him at Mr Thrale's, where were Mr Murphy and some other company. Before dinner, Dr Johnson and I passed some time by ourselves. I was sorry to find it was now resolved that the proposed journey to Italy should not take place this year. He said, 'I am disappointed, to be sure; but it is not a great disappointment.' I wondered to see him bear, with a philosophical calmness, what would have made most people peevish and

fretful. I perceived, however, that he had so warmly cherished the hope of enjoying classical scenes, that he could not easily part with the scheme; for he said, 'I shall probably contrive to get to Italy some other way. But I won't mention it to Mr and Mrs Thrale, as it might vex them.' I suggested, that going to Italy might have done Mr and Mrs Thrale good. JOHNSON. 'I rather believe not, Sir. While grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till grief be *digested*, and then amusement will dissipate the remains of it.'

I said, I disliked the custom which some people had of bringing their children into company, because it in a manner forced us to pay foolish compliments to please their parents. JOHNSON. 'You are right, Sir. We may be excused for not caring much about other people's children, for there are many who care very little about their own children. It may be observed, that men, who from being engaged in business, or from their course of life in whatever way, seldom see their children, do not care much about them. I myself should not have had much fondness for a child of my own.' MRS THRALE. 'Nay, Sir, how can you talk so?' JOHNSON. 'At least, I never wished to have a child.'

On Thursday, April 11, I dined with him at General Paoli's. A journey to Italy was still in his thoughts. He said, A man who has not been in Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean.

I observed the great defect of the tragedy of *Othello* was, that it had not a moral; for that no man could resist the circumstances of suspicion which were artfully suggested to Othello's mind. JOHNSON. 'In the first place, Sir, we learn from *Othello* this very useful moral, not to make an unequal match; in the second place, we learn not to yield too readily to suspicion. The handkerchief is merely a trick, though a very pretty trick; but there are no other circumstances of reasonable suspicion, except what is related by Iago of Cassio's warm expressions concerning Desdemona in his

sleep; and that depended entirely upon the assertion of one man. No, Sir, I think *Othello* has more moral than almost any play.'

Johnson and I supped this evening at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in company with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr Langton, Mr [William] Nairne, now one of the Scotch Judges, with the title of Lord Dunsinan, and my very worthy friend, Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo.

We discussed the question whether drinking improved conversation and benevolence. Sir Joshua maintained it did. JOHNSON. 'No, Sir; before dinner men meet with great inequality of understanding; and those who are conscious of their inferiority, have the modesty not to talk. When they have drunk wine, every man feels himself happy, and loses that modesty, and grows impudent and vociferous: but he is not improved; he is only not sensible of his defects.' Sir Joshua said the Doctor was talking of the effects of excess in wine; but that a moderate glass enlivened the mind, by giving a proper circulation to the blood. 'I am (said he,) in very good spirits when I get up in the morning. By dinner-time I am exhausted; wine puts me in the same state as when I got up; and I am sure that moderate drinking makes people talk better.' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir; wine gives not light, gay, ideal hilarity; but tumultuous, noisy, clamorous merriment. I have heard none of those drunken, – nay, drunken is a coarse word, – none of those *vinous* flights.' SIR JOSHUA. 'Because you have sat by, quite sober, and felt an envy of the happiness of those who were drinking.' JOHNSON. 'Perhaps, contempt.'

I observed, that wine did some people harm, by inflaming, confusing, and irritating their minds; but the experience of mankind had declared in favour of moderate drinking. JOHNSON. 'Sir, I do not say it is wrong to produce self-complacency by drinking; I only deny that it improves the mind. When I drank wine, I scorned to drink it when in company. I have drunk many a bottle by myself; in the first place, because I had need of it to raise my spirits; in the

second place, because I would have nobody to witness its effects upon me.'

He told us, 'almost all his *Ramblers* were written just as they were wanted for the press; that he sent a certain portion of the copy of an essay, and wrote the remainder, while the former part of it was printing. When it was wanted, and he had fairly sat down to it, he was sure it would be done.'

He said, that for general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to; though, to be sure, if a man has a science to learn, he must regularly and resolutely advance. He added, 'what we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in fixing the attention; so there is but one half to be employed on what we read.' He told us, he read Fielding's *Amelia* through without stopping. He said, 'if a man begins to read in the middle of a book, and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it, to go to the beginning. He may, perhaps, not feel again the inclination.'

Soon after this day, he went to Bath with Mr and Mrs Thrale. I had never seen that beautiful city, and wished to take the opportunity of visiting it, while Johnson was there.

On the 26th of April, I went to Bath; and on my arrival at the Pelican inn, found lying for me an obliging invitation from Mr and Mrs Thrale, by whom I was agreeably entertained almost constantly during my stay. They were gone to the rooms; but there was a kind note from Dr Johnson, that he should sit at home all the evening. I went to him directly, and before Mr and Mrs Thrale returned, we had by ourselves some hours of tea-drinking and talk.

I shall group together such of his sayings as I preserved during the few days that I was at Bath.

It having been mentioned, I know not with what truth, that, a certain female political writer, [Catharine Macaulay] whose doctrines he disliked, had of late become very fond of dress, sat hours together at her toilet, and even put on rouge: — JOHNSON. 'She is better employed at her toilet,

than using her pen. It is better she should be reddening her own cheeks, than blackening other people's characters.'

He would not allow me to praise a lady [Margaret Owen, a relative of Mrs Thrale] then at Bath; observing, 'She does not gain upon me, Sir; I think her empty-headed.' He was, indeed, a stern critick upon characters and manners. Even Mrs Thrale did not escape his friendly animadversion at times. When he and I were one day endeavouring to ascertain, article by article, how one of our friends [Bennet Langton] could possibly spend as much money in his family as he told us he did, she interrupted us by a lively extravagant sally, on the expence of clothing his children, describing it in a very ludicrous and fanciful manner. Johnson looked a little angry, and said, 'Nay, Madam, when you are declaiming, declaim; and when you are calculating, calculate.' At another time, when she said, perhaps affectedly, 'I don't like to fly.' JOHNSON. 'With *your* wings, Madam, you *must* fly: but have a care, there are *clippers* abroad.'

We were by no means pleased with our inn at Bristol. 'Let us see now, (said I,) how we should describe it.' Johnson was ready with his raillery. 'Describe it, Sir? – Why, it was so bad that Boswell wished to be in Scotland!'

After Dr Johnson's return to London, I was several times with him at his house, where I occasionally slept, in the room that had been assigned to me. I dined with him at Dr Taylor's, at General Oglethorpe's, and at General Paoli's. To avoid a tedious minuteness, I shall group together what I have preserved of his conversation during this period also, without specifying each scene where it passed, except one, which will be found so remarkable as certainly to deserve a very particular relation.

Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, I think, might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put into the hands of every young gentleman. An elegant manner and easiness of behaviour are acquired gradually and imperceptibly. No man can say "I'll be genteel." There are ten genteel women for one genteel man, because they are more restrained. A man without some degree

of restraint is unsufferable; but we are all less restrained than women. Were a woman sitting in company to put out her legs before her as most men do, we should be tempted to kick them in.'

No man was a more attentive and nice observer of behaviour in those whose company he happened to be, than Johnson; or, however strange it may seem to many, had a higher estimation of its refinements. Lord Eliot informs me, that one day when Johnson and he were at dinner at a gentleman's house in London, upon Lord Chesterfield's Letters being mentioned, Johnson surprized the company by this sentence: 'Every man of any education would rather be called a rascal, than accused of deficiency in *the graces*.' Mr [Edward] Gibbon, who was present, turned to a lady [probably Mrs Thrale] who knew Johnson well, and lived much with him, and in his quaint manner, tapping his box, addressed her thus: 'Don't you think, Madam, (looking towards Johnson,) that among *all* your acquaintance, you could find *one* exception?' The lady smiled, and seemed to acquiesce.

'Many things which are false are transmitted from book to book, and gain credit in the world. One of these is the cry against the evil of luxury. Now the truth is, that luxury produces much good. Take the luxury of building in London. Does it not produce real advantage in the conveniency and elegance of accommodation, and this all from the exertion of industry? People will tell you, with a melancholy face, how many builders are in gaol. It is plain they are in gaol, not for building; for rents are not fallen. — A man gives half a guinea for a dish of green peas. How much gardening does this occasion? how many labourers must the competition to have such things early in the market, keep in employment? You will hear it said, very gravely, "Why was not the half-guinea, thus spent in luxury, given to the poor? To how many might it have afforded a good meal?" Alas! has it not gone to the *industrious* poor, whom it is better to support than the *idle* poor? You are much surer that you are doing good when you *pay* money to those who work, as the recom-

pence of their labour, than when you *give* money merely in charity.'

When I complained of having dined at a splendid table⁶ without hearing one sentence of conversation worthy of being remembered, he said, 'Sir, there seldom is any such conversation.' BOSWELL. 'Why then meet at table?' JOHNSON. 'Why, to eat and drink together, and to promote kindness; and, Sir, this is better done when there is no solid conversation; for when there is, people differ in opinion, and get into bad humour, or some of the company who are not capable of such conversation, are left out, and feel themselves uneasy. It was for this reason, Sir Robert Walpole said, he always talked bawdy at his table, because in that all could join.'

Being irritated by hearing a gentleman [Boswell] ask Mr Levett a variety of questions concerning him, when he was sitting by, he broke out, 'Sir, you have but two topicks, yourself and me. I am sick of both.'

I am now to record a very curious incident in Dr Johnson's Life, which fell under my own observation and which I am persuaded will, with the liberal-minded, be much to his credit.

My desire of being acquainted with celebrated men of every description, had made me, much about the same time, obtain an introduction to Dr Samuel Johnson and to John Wilkes, Esq. Two men more different could perhaps not be selected out of all mankind. They had even attacked one another with some asperity in their writings; yet I lived in habits of friendship with both. I conceived an irresistible wish, if possible, to bring Dr Johnson and Mr Wilkes together. How to manage it, was a nice and difficult matter.

My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men, than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had invited me to meet Mr Wilkes and some more gentlemen on Wednesday, May 15. 'Pray (said I,) let us have Dr Johnson.' – 'What, with Mr Wilkes? not for the world, (said Mr Edward Dilly :) Dr

Johnson would never forgive me.' – 'Come, (said I,) if you'll let me negotiate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well.' DILLY. 'Nay, if you will take it upon you, I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here.'

Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, 'Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?' he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, 'Dine with Jack Wilkes, Sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch.' I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening, took occasion to open my plans thus: – 'Mr Dilly, Sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I am obliged to Mr Dilly. I will wait upon him –' BOSWELL. 'Provided, Sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have, is agreeable to you.' JOHNSON. 'What do you mean, Sir? What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world, as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?' BOSWELL. 'I beg your pardon, Sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of what he calls his patriotick friends with him.' JOHNSON. 'Well, Sir, and what then? What care I for his *patriotick friends*? Poh!' BOSWELL. 'I should not be surprized to find Jack Wilkes there.' JOHNSON. 'And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me*, Sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally.' BOSWELL. 'Pray forgive me, Sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me.' Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

Upon the much-expected Wednesday, I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, as upon a former occasion, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. 'How is this, Sir? (said I.) Don't you recollect that you are to dine at Mr Dilly's?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs Williams.' BOSWELL. 'But, my dear Sir, you know you were engaged to Mr Dilly, and I told him so. He will expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come.' JOHNSON. 'You must talk to Mrs Williams about this.'

Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured would yet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to shew Mrs Williams such a degree of humane attention, as frequently imposed some restraint upon him; and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened down stairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr Johnson had engaged to me to dine this day at Mr Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. 'Yes, Sir, (said she, pretty peevishly,) Dr Johnson is to dine at home.' – 'Madam, (said I,) his respect for you is such, that I know he will not leave you unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company, I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day; as Mr Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him to-day. And then, Madam, be pleased to consider my situation; I carried the message, and I assured Mr Dilly that Dr Johnson was to come, and no doubt he has made a dinner, and invited a company, and boasted of the honour he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there.' She gradually softened to my solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr Johnson, 'That all things considered,

she thought he should certainly go.' I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, 'indifferent in his choice to go or stay;' but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs Williams's consent, he roared, 'Frank, a clean shirt,' and was very soon drest. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna-Green.

When we entered Mr Dilly's drawing room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr Dilly, 'Who is that gentleman, Sir?' – 'Mr Arthur Lee.' – JOHNSON. 'Too, too, too,' (under his breath,) which was one of his habitual mutterings. Mr Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot* but an *American*. He was afterwards minister from the United States at the court of Madrid. 'And who is the gentleman in lace?' – 'Mr Wilkes, Sir.' This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. His feelings, I dare say, were awkward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he, therefore, resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

The cheering sound of 'Dinner is upon the table,' dissolved his reverie, and we *all* sat down without any symptom of ill humour. There were present, besides Mr Wilkes, and Mr Arthur Lee, who was an old companion of mine when he studied physick at Edinburgh, Mr (now Sir John) Miller, Dr [John Coakley] Lettsom,⁷ and Mr [Philip] Slater the druggist. Mr Wilkes placed himself next to Dr Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness, that he gained upon him insensibly. No man eat more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate.

Mr Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. 'Pray give me leave, Sir : – It is better here – A little of the brown – Some fat, Sir – A little of the stuffing – Some gravy – Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter – Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange ; – or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest.' – 'Sir, Sir, I am obliged to you, Sir,' cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of 'surly virtue,' but, in a short while, of complacency.

Foote being mentioned, Johnson said, 'He is not a good mimick.' One of the company [Edward Dilly] added, 'A merry Andrew, a buffoon.' JOHNSON. 'But he has wit too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading; he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he has in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, Sir, when you think you have got him – like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for his wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. Garrick is under many restraints from which Foote is free.' WILKES. 'Garrick's wit is more like Lord Chesterfield's.' JOHNSON. 'The first time I was in company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him. But the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, Sir, he was irresistible. He upon one occasion experienced, in an extraordinary degree, the efficacy of his powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers amongst his numerous acquaintance. Fitzherbert was one who took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being

afraid of offending their master, who they knew liked Foote much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favourite, to be their deputy, and deliver their remonstrance; and having invested him with the whole authority of the kitchen, he was to inform Mr Fitzherbert, in all their names, upon a certain day, that they would drink Foote's small-beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Foote's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that when he went down stairs, he told them, "This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small-beer."

Somebody observed that Garrick could not have done this. WILKES. 'Garrick would have made the small-beer still smaller. He is now leaving the stage; but he will play *Scrub* all his life.' I knew that Johnson would let nobody attack Garrick but himself, as Garrick once said to me, and I had heard him praise his liberality; so to bring out his commendation of his celebrated pupil, I said, loudly, 'I have heard Garrick is liberal.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England that I am acquainted with, and that not from ostentatious views. Garrick was very poor when he began life; so when he came to have money, he probably was very unskilful in giving away, and saved when he should not. But Garrick began to be liberal as soon as he could; and I am of opinion, the reputation of avarice which he has had, has been very lucky for him, and prevented his having many enemies. You despise a man for avarice, but do not hate him. Garrick might have been much better attacked for living with more splendour than is suitable to a player: if they had had the wit to have assaulted him in that quarter, they might have galled him more. But they have kept clamouring about his avarice, which has rescued him from much obloquy and envy.'

Talking of the great difficulty of obtaining authentick information for biography, Johnson told us, 'When I was a young fellow I wanted to write the *Life of Dryden*, and in

order to get materials, I applied to the only two persons then alive who had seen him; these were old [Owen Mac] Swinney, and old Cibber. Swinney's information was no more than this, "That at Will's coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter, and was then called his winter-chair; and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer-chair." Cibber could tell no more but "That he remembered him a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's." You are to consider that Cibber was then at a great distance from Dryden, had perhaps one leg only in the room, and durst not draw in the other.'

Mr Arthur Lee mentioned some Scotch who had taken possession of a barren part of America, and wondered why they should choose it. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, all barrenness is comparative. The *Scotch* would not know it to be barren.' BOSWELL. 'Come, come, he is flattering the English. You have now been in Scotland, Sir, and say if you did not see meat and drink enough there.' JOHNSON. 'Why yes, Sir; meat and drink enough to give the inhabitants sufficient strength to run away from home.' All these quick and lively sallies were said sportively, quite in jest, and with a smile, which showed that he meant only wit. Upon this topick he and Mr Wilkes could perfectly assimilate; here was a bond of union between them, and I was conscious that as both of them had visited Caledonia, both were fully satisfied of the strange narrow ignorance of those who imagine that it is a land of famine. But they amused themselves with persevering in the old jokes. When I claimed a superiority for Scotland over England in one respect, that no man can be arrested there for a debt merely because another swears it against him; but there must first be the judgement of a court of law ascertaining its justice; and that a seizure of the person, before judgement is obtained, can take place only, if his creditor should swear that he is about to fly from the country: WILKES. 'That, I should think, may be safely sworn of all the Scotch nation.' JOHNSON. (to Mr Wilkes,) 'You must know, Sir, I lately took my friend Boswell and shewed

him genuine civilised life in an English provincial town. I turned him loose at Lichfield, my native city, that he might see for once real civility: for you know he lives among savages in Scotland, and among rakes in London.' WILKES. 'Except when he is with grave, sober, decent people like you and me.' JOHNSON. (smiling,) 'And we ashamed of him.'

They were quite frank and easy. Johnson told the story of his asking Mrs Macaulay to allow her footman to sit down with them, to prove the ridiculousness of the argument for the equality of mankind; and he said to me afterwards, with a nod of satisfaction, 'You saw Mr Wilkes acquiesced.'

After dinner we had an accession of Mrs [Mary] Knowles, the Quaker lady, well known for her various talents, and of Mr Alderman [William] Lee. Amidst some patriotick groans, somebody (I think the Alderman) said, 'Poor old England is lost.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is not so much to be lamented that Old England is lost, as that the Scotch have found it.' Mr Wilkes held a candle to shew a fine print of a beautiful female figure which hung in the room, and pointed out the elegant contour of the bosom with the finger of an arch connoisseur. He afterwards, in a conversation with me, waggishly insisted, that all the time Johnson shewed visible signs of a fervent admiration of the corresponding charms of the fair Quaker.

This record, though by no means so perfect as I could wish, will serve to give a notion of a very curious interview, which was not only pleasing at the time, but had the agreeable and benignant effect of reconciling any animosity, and sweetening any acidity, which in the various bustle of political contest, had been produced in the minds of two men, who though widely different, had so many things in common – classical learning, modern literature, wit, and humour, and ready repartee – that it would have been much to be regretted if they had been for ever at a distance from each other.

Mr Burke gave me much credit for this successful *negotiation*; and pleasantly said, that 'there was nothing to equal it in the whole history of the *Corps Diplomatique*.'

I attended Dr Johnson home, and had the satisfaction to hear him tell Mrs Williams how much he had been pleased

with Mr Wilkes's company, and what an agreeable day he had passed.

I mentioned a scheme which I had of making a tour to the Isle of Man, and giving a full account of it; and that Mr Burke had playfully suggested as a motto,

'The proper study of mankind is MAN.'

JOHNSON. 'Sir, you will get more by the book than the jaunt will cost you; so you will have your diversion for nothing, and add to your reputation.'

On the evening of the next day I took leave of him, being to set out for Scotland. I thanked him with great warmth for all his kindness. 'Sir, (said he,) you are very welcome. Nobody repays it with more.'

PART VII

1777-8

1777 : ÆTAT. 68.] – In 1777, it appears from his *Prayers and Meditations*, that Johnson suffered much from a state of mind ‘unsettled and perplexed,’ and from that constitutional gloom, which, together with his extreme humility and anxiety with regard to his religious state, made him contemplate himself through too dark and unfavourable a medium. It may be said of him, that he ‘saw God in clouds.’ Certain we may be of his injustice to himself in the following lamentable paragraph, which it is painful to think came from the contrite heart of this great man, to whose labours the world is so much indebted : ‘When I survey my past life, I discover nothing but a barren waste of time, with some disorders of body, and disturbances of the mind, very near to madness, which I hope He that made me will suffer to extenuate many faults, and excuse many deficiencies.’ But we find his devotions in this year eminently fervent; and we are comforted by observing intervals of quiet, composure, and gladness.

On Sunday evening, September 14, I arrived at Ashbourne, and drove directly up to Dr Taylor’s door. Dr Johnson and he appeared before I had got out of the post-chaise, and welcomed me cordially.

I told them that I had travelled all the preceding night, and gone to bed at Leek, in Staffordshire; and that when I rose to go to church in the afternoon, I was informed there had been an earthquake, of which, it seems, the shock had been felt, in some degree, at Ashbourne. JOHNSON. ‘Sir, it will be much exaggerated in popular talk : for, in the first place, the common people do not accurately adapt their thoughts to the objects; nor, secondly, do they accurately adapt their words to their thoughts : they do not mean to

lie; but, taking no pains to be exact, they give you very false accounts. A great part of their language is proverbial. If anything rocks at all, they say *it rocks like a cradle*; and in this way they go on.'

Tuesday, September 16, Dr Johnson having mentioned to me the extraordinary size and price of some cattle reared by Dr Taylor, I rode out with our host, surveyed his farm, and was shown one cow which he had sold for a hundred and twenty guineas, and another for which he had been offered a hundred and thirty. Taylor thus described to me his old schoolfellow and friend, Johnson: 'He is a man of a very clear head, great power of words, and a very gay imagination; but there is no disputing with you. He will not hear you, and having a louder voice than you, must roar you down.'

Dr Taylor's nose happening to bleed, he said, it was because he had omitted to have himself blooded four days after a quarter of a year's interval. Dr Johnson, who was a great dabbler in physick, disapproved much of periodical bleeding. 'For (said he,) you accustom yourself to an evacuation which Nature cannot perform of herself, and therefore she cannot help you, should you, from forgetfulness or any other cause, omit it; so you may be suddenly suffocated. You may accustom yourself to other periodical evacuations, because should you omit them, Nature can supply the omission; but Nature cannot open a vein to blood you.' – 'I do not like to take an emetick, (said Taylor,) for fear of breaking some small vessels.' – 'Poh! (said Johnson,) if you have so many things that will break, you had better break your neck at once, and there's an end on't. You will break no small vessels:' (blowing with high derision.)

The horror of death which I had always observed in Dr Johnson, appeared strong to-night. I ventured to tell him, that I had been, for moments in my life, not afraid of death; therefore I could suppose another man in that state of mind for a considerable space of time. He said, 'he never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him.' He added, that it had been observed, that scarce any man dies in pub-

lick, but with apparent resolution; from that desire of praise which never quits us. I said, Dr [William] Dodd¹ seemed to be willing to die, and full of hopes of happiness. 'Sir, (said he,) Dr Dodd would have given both his hands and both his legs to have lived. The better a man is, the more afraid he is of death, having a clearer view of infinite purity.' He owned, that our being in an unhappy uncertainty as to our salvation, was mysterious; and said, 'Ah! we must wait till we are in another state of being, to have many things explained to us.' Even the powerful mind of Johnson seemed foiled by futurity.

Thursday, September 18. Last night Dr Johnson had proposed that the crystal lustre, or chandelier, in Dr Taylor's large room, should be lighted up some time or other. Taylor said, it should be lighted up next night. 'That will do very well, (said I,) for it is Dr Johnson's birth-day.' When we were in the Isle of Skye, Johnson had desired me not to mention his birth-day. He did not seem pleased at this time that I mentioned it, and said (somewhat sternly,) 'he would *not* have the lustre lighted the next day.'

Some ladies, who had been present yesterday when I mentioned his birth-day, came to dinner to-day, and plagued him unintentionally, by wishing him joy. I know not why he disliked having his birth-day mentioned, unless it were that it reminded him of his approaching nearer to death, of which he had a constant dread.

I mentioned to him a friend of mine [George Dempster] who was formerly gloomy from low spirits, and much distressed by the fear of death, but was now uniformly placid, and contemplated his dissolution without any perturbation. 'Sir, (said Johnson,) this is only a disordered imagination taking a different turn.'

Friday, September 19, after breakfast Dr Johnson and I set out in Dr Taylor's chaise to go to Derby. The day was fine, and we resolved to go by Keddlestone, the seat of Lord Scarsdale, that I might see his Lordship's fine house. I was struck with the magnificence of the building; and the extensive park, with the finest verdure, covered with deer, and

cattle, and sheep, delighted me. 'One should think (said I,) that the proprietor of all this *must* be happy.' – 'Nay, Sir, (said Johnson,) all this excludes but one evil – poverty.'

Our names were sent up, and a well-drest elderly housekeeper, a most distinct articulator, shewed us the house; which I need not describe, as there is an account of it published in *Adam's Works in Architecture*. Dr Johnson thought better of it to-day than when he saw it before; for he had lately attacked it violently, saying, 'It would do excellently for a town-hall. The large room with the pillars (said he,) would do for the Judges to sit in at the assizes; the circular room for a jury-chamber; and the rooms above for prisoners.' Still he thought the large room ill lighted, and of no use but for dancing in; and the bed-chambers but indifferent rooms; and that the immense sum which it cost was injudiciously laid out. Dr Taylor had put him in mind of his *appearing* pleased with the house. 'But (said he,) that was when Lord Scarsdale was present. Politeness obliges us to appear pleased with a man's works when he is present. No man will be so ill bred as to question you. You may therefore pay compliments without saying what is not true. I should say to Lord Scarsdale of his large room, "My Lord, this is the most *costly* room that I ever saw;" which is true.'

Dr [Thomas] Manningham, physician in London, who was visiting at Lord Scarsdale's, accompanied us through many of the rooms, and soon afterwards my Lord himself, to whom Dr Johnson was known, appeared, and did the honours of the house. We talked of Mr Langton. Johnson, with a warm vehemence of affectionate regard, exclaimed, 'The earth does not bear a worthier man than Bennet Langton.' We saw a good many fine pictures, which I think are described in one of *Young's Tours*. There is a printed catalogue of them which the housekeeper put into my hand; I should like to view them at leisure. I was much struck with Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream by Rembrandt. We were shown a pretty large library. In his Lordship's dressing-room lay Johnson's small *Dictionary*: he shewed it to me, with some eagerness. He observed, also, Goldsmith's

Animated Nature; and said, 'Here's our friend! The poor Doctor would have been happy to hear of this.'

In our way, Johnson strongly expressed his love of driving fast in a post-chaise. 'If (said he,) I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman; but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation.'

Dr Johnson told us at tea, that when some of Dr Dodd's pious friends were trying to console him by saying that he was going to leave 'a wretched world,' he had honesty enough not to join in the cant: - 'No, no, (said he,) it has been a very agreeable world to me.' Johnson added, 'I respect Dodd for thus speaking the truth; for, to be sure, he had for several years enjoyed a life of great voluptuousness.'

He told us, that Dodd's city friends stood by him so, that a thousand pounds were ready to be given to the gaoler, if he would let him escape. He added, that he knew a friend of Dodd's, who walked about Newgate for some time on the evening before the day of his execution, with five hundred pounds in his pocket, ready to be paid to any of the turnkeys who could get him out: but it was too late; for he was watched with much circumspection. He said, Dodd's friends had an image of him made of wax, which was to have been left in his place; and he believed it was carried into the prison.

Johnson disapproved of Dr Dodd's leaving the world persuaded that *The Convict's Address to his Unhappy Brethren* was of his own writing. 'But, Sir, (said I,) you contributed to the deception; for when Mr Seward expressed a doubt to you that it was not Dodd's own, because it had a great deal more force of mind in it than any thing known to be his, you answered, - "Why should you think so? Depend upon it, Sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully."' JOHNSON. 'Sir, as Dodd got it from me to pass as his own, while that could do him any good, there was an *implied promise* that I should not own it. To own it, therefore, would have been telling a

lie, with the addition of breach of promise, which was worse than simply telling a lie to make it be believed it was Dodd's. Besides, Sir, I did not *directly* tell a lie : I left the matter uncertain.'

On Saturday, September 20, after breakfast, when Taylor was gone out to his farm, Dr Johnson and I had a serious conversation by ourselves on melancholy and madness; which he was, I always thought, erroneously inclined to confound together. Melancholy, like 'great wit,' may be 'near allied to madness;' but there is, in my opinion, a distinct separation between them. When he talked of madness, he was to be understood as speaking of those who were in any great degree disturbed, or as it is commonly expressed, 'troubled in mind.'

Johnson said, 'A madman loves to be with people whom he fears; not as a dog fears the lash; but of whom he stands in awe.' I was struck with the justice of this observation.

He added, 'Madmen are all sensual in the lower stages of the distemper. They are eager for gratifications to sooth their minds, and divert their attention from the misery which they suffer : but when they grow very ill, pleasure is too weak for them, and they seek for pain. Employment, Sir, and hardships, prevent melancholy. I suppose in all our army in America there was not one man who went mad.'

We entered seriously upon a question of much importance to me, which Johnson was pleased to consider with friendly attention. I had long complained to him that I felt myself discontented in Scotland, as too narrow a sphere, and that I wished to make my chief residence in London, the great scene of ambition, instruction, and amusement : a scene, which was to me, comparatively speaking, a heaven upon earth. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, I never knew any one who had such a *gust* for London as you have : and I cannot blame you for your wish to live there : yet, Sir, were I in your father's place, I should not consent to your settling there; for I have the old feudal notions, and I should be afraid that Auchinleck would be deserted, as you would soon find it more desirable to have a country-seat in a better climate.'

I suggested a doubt, that if I were to reside in London, the exquisite zest with which I relished it in occasional visits might go off, and I might grow tired of it. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.'

On Sunday, September 21, we went to the church of Ashbourne, which is one of the largest and most luminous that I have seen in any town of the same size. I felt great satisfaction in considering that I was supported in my fondness for solemn publick worship by the general concurrence and munificence of mankind.

Johnson and Taylor were so different from each other, that I wondered at their preserving such an intimacy. Their having been at school and college together, might, in some degree, account for this; but Sir Joshua Reynolds has furnished me with a stronger reason; for Johnson mentioned to him, that he had been told by Taylor he was to be his heir. I shall not take upon me to animadvert upon this; but certain it is, that Johnson paid great attention to Taylor. He now, however, said to me, 'Sir, I love him; but I do not love him more; my regard for him does not increase. As it is said in the Apocrypha, "his talk is of bullocks:" I do not suppose he is very fond of my company. His habits are by no means sufficiently clerical: this he knows that I see; and no man likes to live under the eye of perpetual disapprobation.'

I have no doubt that a good many sermons were composed for Taylor by Johnson. At this time I found, upon his table, a part of one which he had newly begun to write.

In the evening, Johnson, being in very good spirits, entertained us with several characteristical portraits. I regret that any of them escaped my retention and diligence. I found, from experience, that to collect my friend's conversation so as to exhibit it with any degree of its original flavour, it was necessary to write it down without delay. To record his sayings, after some distance of time, was like preserving or pickling long-kept and faded fruits, or other vegetables,

which, when in that state, have little or nothing of their taste when fresh.

I shall present my readers with a series of what I gathered this evening from the Johnsonian garden.

'Colley Cibber once consulted me as to one of his birth-day Odes, a long time before it was wanted. I objected very freely to several passages. Cibber lost patience, and would not read his Ode to an end. When we had done with criticism, we walked over to Richardson's, the authour of *Clarissa*, and I wondered to find Richardson displeased that I "did not treat Cibber with more *respect*." Now, Sir, to talk of *respect* for a *player*!' (smiling disdainfully.) BOSWELL. 'There, Sir, you are always heretical: you never will allow merit to a player.' JOHNSON. 'Merit, Sir! what merit? Do you respect a rope-dancer, or a ballad-singer?' BOSWELL. 'No, Sir: but we respect a great player, as a man who can conceive lofty sentiments, and can express them gracefully.' JOHNSON. 'What, Sir, a fellow who claps a hump on his back, and a lump on his leg, and cries "*I am Richard the Third*"? Nay, Sir, a ballad-singer is a higher man, for he does two things; he repeats and he sings: there is both recitation and musick in his performance: the player only recites.' BOSWELL. 'My dear Sir! you may turn anything into ridicule. I allow, that a player of farce is not entitled to respect; he does a little thing: but he who can represent exalted characters, and touch the noblest passions, has very respectable powers; and mankind have agreed in admiring great talents for the stage. We must consider, too, that a great player does what very few are capable to do: his art is a very rare faculty. *Who* can repeat Hamlet's soliloquy, "*To be, or not to be,*" as Garrick does it?' JOHNSON. 'Any body may. Jemmy, [James Fieldhouse]² there (a boy about eight years old, who was in the room,) will do it as well in a week.' BOSWELL. 'No, no, Sir: and as a proof of the merit of great acting, and of the value which mankind set upon it, Garrick has got a hundred thousand pounds.' JOHNSON. 'Is getting a hundred thousand pounds a proof of excellence? That has been done by a scoundrel commissary.' [Robert Paris Taylor]

This was most fallacious reasoning. I was *sure*, for once, that I had the best side of the argument.

On Monday, September 22, when at breakfast, I unguardedly said to Dr Johnson, 'I wish I saw you and Mrs Macaulay together.' He grew very angry; and, after a pause, while a cloud gathered on his brow, he burst out, 'No, Sir; you would not see us quarrel, to make you sport. Don't you know that it is very uncivil to *pit* two people against one another?' Then, checking himself, and wishing to be more gentle, he added, 'I do not say you should be hanged or drowned for this; but it *is* very uncivil.' Dr Taylor thought him in the wrong, and spoke to him privately of it; but I afterwards acknowledged to Johnson that I was to blame, for I candidly owned, that I meant to express a desire to see a contest between Mrs Macaulay and him; but then I knew how the contest would end; so that I was to see him triumph. JOHNSON. 'Sir, you cannot be sure how a contest will end; and no man has a right to engage two people in a dispute by which their passions may be inflamed, and they may part with bitter resentment against each other. I would sooner keep company with a man from whom I must guard my pockets, than with a man who contrives to bring me into a dispute with somebody that he may hear it. This is the great fault of ———, (naming one of our friends,) [Bennet Langton] endeavouring to introduce a subject upon which he knows two people in the company differ.' BOSWELL. 'But he told me, Sir, he does it for instruction.' JOHNSON. 'Whatever the motive be, Sir, the man who does so, does very wrong. He has no more right to instruct himself at such a risk, than he has to make two people fight a duel, that he may learn how to defend himself.'

He found great fault with : gentleman of our acquaintance [also Langton] for keeping a bad table. 'Sir, (said he,) when a man is invited to dinner, he is disappointed if he does not get something good. I advised Mrs Thrale, who has no card-parties at her house, to give sweet-meats, and such good things, in an evening, as are not commonly given, and she would find company enough come to her; for every body

loves to have things which please the palate put in their way, without trouble or preparation.' Such was his attention to the *minutiæ* of life and manners.

He thus characterised the [third] Duke of Devonshire, grandfather of the present representative of that very respectable family: 'He was not a man of superiour abilities, but he was a man strictly faithful to his word. If, for instance, he had promised you an acorn, and none had grown that year in his woods, he would not have contented himself with that excuse; he would have sent to Denmark for it.'

During this interview at Ashbourne, Johnson seemed to be more uniformly social, cheerful, and alert, than I had almost ever seen him. He was prompt on great occasions and on small. Taylor, who praised every thing of his own to excess; in short, 'whose geese were all swans,' as the proverb says, expatiated on the excellence of his bull-dog, which, he told us, was 'perfectly well shaped.' Johnson, after examining the animal attentively, thus repressed the vain-glory of our host: - 'No, Sir, he is *not* well shaped; for there is not the quick transition from the thickness of the fore-part, to the *tenuity* - the thin part - behind, which a bull-dog ought to have.' This *tenuity* was the only *hard* word that I heard him use during this interview, and it will be observed, he instantly put another expression in its place. Taylor said, a small bull-dog was as good as a large one. JOHNSON. 'No, Sir; for, in proportion to his size, he has strength: and your argument would prove, that a good bull-dog may be as small as a mouse.' It was amazing how he entered with perspicuity and keenness upon every thing that occurred in conversation. Most men, whom I know, would no more think of discussing a question about a bull-dog, than of attacking a bull.

One morning after breakfast, when the sun shone bright, we walked out together, and 'pored' for some time with placid indolence upon an artificial water-fall, which Dr Taylor had made by building a strong dyke of stone across the river behind his garden. It was now somewhat obstructed by branches of trees and other rubbish, which had come down the river, and settled close to it. Johnson, partly from a de-

sire to see it play more freely, and partly from that inclination to activity which will animate, at times, the most inert and sluggish mortal, took a long pole which was lying on the bank, and pushed down several parcels of this wreck with painful assiduity, while I stood quietly by, wondering to behold the sage thus curiously employed, and smiling with a humorous satisfaction each time when he carried his point. He worked till he was quite out of breath.

On Tuesday, September 23, Johnson was remarkably cordial to me. It being necessary for me to return to Scotland soon, I had fixed on the next day for my setting out, and I felt a tender concern at the thought of parting with him.

He found fault with me for using the phrase to *make* money. 'Don't you see (said he,) the impropriety of it? To *make* money is to *coin* it: you should say *get* money.' The phrase, however, is, I think, pretty current. But Johnson was at all times jealous of infractions upon the genuine English language, and prompt to repress colloquial barbarisms; such as *pledging myself*, for *undertaking*; *line*, for *department* or *branch*, as, the *civil line*, the *banking line*. He was particularly indignant against the almost universal use of the word *idea* in the sense of *notion* or *opinion*, when it is clear that *idea* can only signify something of which an image can be formed in the mind.

This evening, while some of the tunes of ordinary composition were played with no great skill, my frame was agitated, and I was conscious of a generous attachment to Johnson, as my preceptor and friend, mixed with an affectionate regret that he was an old man, whom I should probably lose in a short time. I thought I could defend him at the point of my sword. My reverence and affection for him were in full glow. I said to him, 'My dear Sir, we must meet every year, if you don't quarrel with me.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, you are more likely to quarrel with me, than I with you. My regard for you is greater almost than I have words to express; but I do not choose to be always repeating it; write it down in the first leaf of your pocket-book, and never doubt of it again.'

On Wednesday, March 18 [1778] I arrived in London, and found him at his own house, sitting with Mrs Williams, and was informed that the room formerly allotted to me was now appropriated to a charitable purpose; Mrs Desmoulins, and I think her daughter, and a Miss Carmichael,³ being all lodged in it. Such was his humanity, and such his generosity, that Mrs Desmoulins herself told me, he allowed her half-a-guinea a week. Let it be remembered, that this was above a twelfth part of his pension.

His liberality, indeed, was at all periods of his life very remarkable. Mr [Charles] Howard, of Lichfield, at whose father's house Johnson had in his early years been kindly received, told me, that when he was a boy at the Charter-House, his father wrote to him to go and pay a visit to Mr Samuel Johnson, which he accordingly did, and found him in an upper room, of poor appearance. Johnson received him with much courteousness, and talked a great deal to him, as to a school-boy, of the course of his education, and other particulars. When he afterwards came to know and understand the high character of this great man, he recollected his condescension with wonder. He added, that when he was going away, Mr Johnson presented him with half-a-guinea; and this, said Mr Howard, was at a time when he probably had not another.

He returned next day to Streatham, to Mr Thrale's [where I also] went on Monday, March 30. Next morning, while we were at breakfast, Johnson gave a very earnest recommendation of what he himself practised with the utmost conscientiousness: I mean a strict attention to truth, even in the most minute particulars. He was indeed so much impressed with the prevalence of falsehood, voluntary or unintentional, that I never knew any person who upon hearing an extraordinary circumstance told, discovered more of the *incredulus odi*. He would say, with a significant look and decisive tone, 'It is not so. Do not tell this again.' He inculcated upon all his friends the importance of perpetual vigilance against the slightest degrees of falsehood; the effect of which, as Sir Joshua Reynolds observed to me, has been,

that all who were of his *school* are distinguished for a love of truth and accuracy, which they would not have possessed in the same degree, if they had not been acquainted with Johnson.

Talking of ghosts, he said, 'It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it.'

He said, 'John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do.'

On Tuesday, April 7, I breakfasted with him at his house. He said, 'nobody was content.' I mentioned to him a respectable person [Lord Auchinleck] in Scotland whom he knew; and I asserted, that I really believed he was always content. 'He seems to amuse himself quite well; to have his attention fixed, and his tranquillity preserved by very small matters. I have tried this; but it would not do with me.' JOHNSON. (laughing,) 'No, Sir; it must be born with a man to be contented to take up with little things. Women have a great advantage that they may take up with little things, without disgracing themselves: a man cannot, except with fiddling. Had I learnt to fiddle, I should have done nothing else.' BOSWELL. 'Pray, Sir, did you ever play on any musical instrument?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir. I once bought me a flagelet; but I never made out a tune.' BOSWELL. 'A flagelet, Sir! — so small an instrument? I should have liked to hear you play on the violoncello. *That* should have been *your* instrument.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I might as well have played on the violoncello as another; but I should have done nothing else. No, Sir; a man would never undertake great things, could he be amused with small. I once tried knotting. Dempster's sister undertook to teach me; but I could not learn it.' BOSWELL. 'So, Sir; it will be related in pompous narrative, "Once for his amusement he tried knotting; nor did this Hercules disdain the distaff."' JOHNSON. 'Knitting of stockings is a good

amusement. As a freeman of Aberdeen I should be a knitter of stockings.' He asked me to go down with him and dine at Mr Thrale's at Streatham, to which I agreed.

Soon after our arrival at Thrale's, I heard one of the maids calling eagerly on another, to go to Dr Johnson. I wondered what this could mean. I afterwards learnt, that it was to give her a Bible, which he had brought from London as a present to her.

He was for a considerable time occupied in reading *Mémoires de Fontenelle*, leaning and swinging upon the low gate into the court, without his hat.

At dinner, Mrs Thrale expressed a wish to go and see Scotland. JOHNSON. 'Seeing Scotland, Madam, is only seeing a worse England. It is seeing the flower gradually fade away to the naked stalk. Seeing the Hebrides, indeed, is seeing quite a different scene.'

On Friday, April 10, we dined together with Mr Scott, (now Sir William Scott, his Majesty's Advocate General,) at his chambers in the Temple, nobody else there.

Talking of fame, for which there is so great a desire, I observed how little there is of it in reality, compared with the other objects of human attention. 'Let every man recollect, and he will be sensible how small a part of his time is employed in talking or thinking of Shakspeare, Voltaire, or any of the most celebrated men that have ever lived, or are now supposed to occupy the attention and admiration of the world. Let this be extracted and compressed; into what a narrow space will it go!' I then silyly introduced Mr Garrick's fame, and his assuming the airs of a great man. JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is wonderful how *little* Garrick assumes. Consider, Sir: celebrated men, such as you have mentioned, have had their applause at a distance; but Garrick had it dashed in his face, sounded in his ears, and went home every night with the plaudits of a thousand in his *cranium*. Then, Sir, Garrick did not *find*, but *made* his way to the tables, the levees, and almost the bed-chambers of the great. Then, Sir, Garrick had under him a numerous body of people; who, from fear of his power, and hopes of his favour, and admiration of his

talents, were constantly submissive to him. And here is a man who has advanced the dignity of his profession. Garrick has made a player a higher character.' SCOTT. 'And he is a very sprightly writer too.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; and all this is supported by great wealth of his own acquisition. If all this had happened to me, I should have had a couple of fellows with long poles walking before me, to knock down every body that stood in the way. Consider, if all this had happened to Cibber or [James] Quin, they'd have jumped over the moon. - Yet Garrick speaks to *us*.' (smiling.) BOSWELL. 'And Garrick is a very good man, a charitable man.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, a liberal man. He has given away more money than any man in England. There may be a little vanity mixed; but he has shewn, that money is not his first object.' BOSWELL. 'Yet Foote used to say of him, that he walked out with an intention to do a generous action; but, turning the corner of a street, he met with the ghost of a half-penny, which frightened him.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that is very true, too; for I never knew a man of whom it could be said with less certainty to-day, what he will do to-morrow, than Garrick; it depends so much on his humour at the time.' SCOTT. 'I am glad to hear of his liberality. He has been represented as very saving.' JOHNSON. 'With his domestick saving we have nothing to do. I remember drinking tea with him long ago, when Peg Woffington made it, and he grumbled at her for making it too strong. He had then begun to feel money in his purse, and did not know when he should have enough of it.'

We talked of war. JOHNSON. 'Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea.' BOSWELL. 'Lord Mansfield does not.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in a company of General Officers and Admirals who have been in service, he would shrink; he'd wish to creep under the table. Were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, "Follow me, and hear a lecture on philosophy;" and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, "Follow me, and dethrone the Czar;" a man would be

ashamed to follow Socrates. Sir, the impression is universal; yet it is strange.'

He talked of Mr Charles Fox, of whose abilities he thought highly, but observed, that he did not talk much at our CLUB. I have heard Mr Gibbon remark, 'that Mr Fox could not be afraid of Dr Johnson; yet he certainly was very shy of saying any thing in Dr Johnson's presence.'

He sometimes could not bear being teased with questions. I was once present when a gentleman [Boswell] asked so many as, 'What did you do, Sir?' 'What did you say, Sir?' that he at last grew enraged, and said, 'I will not be put to the *question*. Don't you consider, Sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman? I will not be baited with *what*, and *why*; what is this? what is that? why is a cow's tail long? why is a fox's tail bushy?' The gentleman, who was a good deal out of countenance, said, 'Why, Sir, you are so good, that I venture to trouble you.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, my being so *good* is no reason why you should be so *ill*.'

He talked with an uncommon animation of travelling into distant countries; that the mind was enlarged by it, and that an acquisition of dignity of character was derived from it. He expressed a particular enthusiasm with respect to visiting the wall of China. I caught it for the moment, and said I really believed I should go and see the wall of China had I not children, of whom it was my duty to take care. 'Sir, (said he,) by doing so, you would do what would be of importance in raising your children to eminence. There would be a lustre reflected upon them from your spirit and curiosity. They would be at all times regarded as the children of a man who had gone to view the wall of China. I am serious, Sir.'

I this evening boasted, that although I did not write what is called stenography, or short-hand, in appropriated characters devised for the purpose, I had a method of my own of writing half words, and leaving out some altogether, so as yet to keep the substance and language of any discourse which I had heard so much in view, that I could give it very completely soon after I had taken it down.

He and I, and Mrs Williams, went to dine with the

Reverend Dr Percy. Talking of Goldsmith, Johnson said, he was very envious. I defended him, by observing that he owned it frankly upon all occasions. JOHNSON. 'Sir, you are enforcing the charge. He had so much envy, that he could not conceal it. He was so full of it that he overflowed. He talked of it to be sure often enough. Now, Sir, what a man avows, he is not ashamed to think; though many a man thinks, what he is ashamed to avow.'

And here I shall record a scene of too much heat between Dr Johnson and Dr [Thomas] Percy, which I should have suppressed were it not that it gave occasion to display the truly tender and benevolent heart of Johnson, who, as soon as he found a friend was at all hurt by any thing which he had 'said in his wrath,' was not only prompt and desirous to be reconciled, but exerted himself to make ample reparation.

Books of Travels having been mentioned, Johnson praised Pennant very highly. Dr Percy, knowing himself to be the heir male of the ancient Percies, and having the warmest and most dutiful attachment to the noble House of Northumberland, could not sit quietly and hear a man praised, who had spoken disrespectfully of Alnwick-Castle and the Duke's pleasure grounds, especially as he thought meanly of his travels. He therefore opposed Johnson eagerly. JOHNSON. 'Pennant in what he has said of Alnwick, has done what he intended; he has made you very angry.' PERCY. 'He has said the garden is *trim*, which is representing it like a citizen's parterre, when the truth is, there is a very large extent of fine turf and gravel walks.' JOHNSON. 'According to your own account, Sir, Pennant is right. It is trim. Here is grass cut close, and gravel rolled smooth. Is not that trim? The extent is nothing against that; a mile may be as trim as a square yard. Your extent puts me in mind of the citizen's enlarged dinner, two pieces of roast-beef, and two puddings. There is no variety, no mind exerted in laying out the ground, no trees.' PERCY. 'He pretends to give the natural history of Northumberland, and yet takes no notice of the immense number of trees planted there of late.' JOHNSON. 'That, Sir, has nothing to do with the *natural* history; that is *civil*

history. A man who gives the natural history of the oak, is not to tell how many oaks have been planted in this place or that. A man who gives the natural history of the cow, is not to tell how many cows are milked at Islington. The animal is the same, whether milked in the Park or at Islington.' PERCY. 'Pennant does not describe well; a carrier who goes along the side of Loch-lomond would describe it better.' JOHNSON. 'I think he describes very well.' PERCY. 'I travelled after him.' JOHNSON. 'And I travelled after him.' PERCY. 'But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do.' I wondered at Dr Percy's venturing thus. Dr Johnson said nothing at the time; but inflammable particles were collecting for a cloud to burst. In a little while Dr Percy said something more in disparagement of Pennant. JOHNSON. (pointedly,) 'This is the resentment of a narrow mind, because he did not find every thing in Northumberland.' PERCY. (feeling the stroke,) 'Sir, you may be as rude as you please.' JOHNSON. 'Hold, Sir! Don't talk of rudeness; remember, Sir, you told me (puffing hard with passion struggling for a vent,) I was short-sighted. We have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please.' PERCY. 'Upon my honour, Sir, I did not mean to be uncivil.' JOHNSON. 'I cannot say so, Sir; for I *did* mean to be uncivil, thinking *you* had been uncivil.' Dr Percy rose, ran up to him, and taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been misunderstood; upon which a reconciliation instantly took place. JOHNSON. 'My dear Sir, I am willing you shall *hang* Pennant.'

On Monday, April 13, I dined with Johnson at Mr Langton's, where were Dr [Beilby] Porteus, then Bishop of Chester, now of London, and Dr [George] Stinton. He was at first in a very silent mood. Before dinner he said nothing but 'Pretty baby,' to one of the children. Langton said very well to me afterwards, that he could repeat Johnson's conversation before dinner, as Johnson had said that he could repeat a complete chapter of *The Natural History of Iceland*, from the Danish of *Horrebow*, the whole of which was exactly thus:—

'CHAP. LXXII. *Concerning snakes.*

'There are no snakes to be met with throughout the whole island.'

On Wednesday, April 15, I dined with Dr Johnson at Mr Dilly's. [Also there were] Mrs Knowles, the ingenious Quaker lady, Miss [Anna] Seward, the poetess of Lichfield, the Reverend Dr [Henry] Mayo, and the Rev. Mr [Henry] Beresford, Tutor to the Duke of Bedford. Before dinner Dr Johnson seized upon Mr Charles Sheridan's *Account of the late Revolution in Sweden*, and seemed to read it ravenously, as if he devoured it, which was to all appearance his method of studying. 'He knows how to read better than any one (said Mrs Knowles;) he gets at the substance of a book directly; he tears out the heart of it.' He kept it wrapt up in the table-cloth in his lap during the time of dinner, from an avidity to have one entertainment in readiness when he should have finished another; resembling (if I may use so coarse a simile) a dog who holds a bone in his paws in reserve, while he eats something else which has been thrown to him.

The subject of cookery having been very naturally introduced at a table where Johnson, who boasted of the niceness of his palate, owned that 'he always found a good dinner,' he said, 'I could write a better book of cookery than has ever yet been written; it should be a book upon philosophical principles. Pharmacy is now made much more simple. Cookery may be made so too. A prescription which is now compounded of five ingredients, had formerly fifty in it. So in cookery, if the nature of the ingredients be well known, much fewer will do. Then as you cannot make bad meat good, I would tell what is the best butcher's meat, the best beef, the best pieces; how to choose young fowls; the proper season of different vegetables; and then how to roast and boil, and compound.' DILLY. 'Mrs [Hannah] Glasse's *Cookery*, which is the best, was written by Dr [John] Hill. Half the trade know this.'¹⁴ JOHNSON. 'Well, Sir. This shews how much better the subject of cookery may be treated by a philoso-

pher. I doubt if the book be written by Dr Hill; for, in Mrs Glasse's *Cookery*, which I have looked into, salt-petre and sal-prunella are spoken of as different substances, whereas sal-prunella is only salt-petre burnt on charcoal; and Hill could not be ignorant of this. However, as the greatest part of such a book is made by transcription, this mistake may have been carelessly adopted. But you shall see what a Book of Cookery I shall make! I shall agree with Mr Dilly for the copy-right.' MISS SEWARD. 'That would be Hercules with the distaff indeed.' JOHNSON. 'No, Madam. Women can spin very well; but they cannot make a good book of Cookery.'

Mrs Knowles affected to complain that men had much more liberty allowed them than women. JOHNSON. 'Why, Madam, women have all the liberty they should wish to have. We have all the labour and the danger, and the women all the advantage. We go to sea, we build houses, we do everything, in short, to pay our court to the women.' MRS KNOWLES. 'The Doctor reasons very wittily, but not convincingly. Now, take the instance of building; the mason's wife, if she is ever seen in liquor, is ruined; the mason may get himself drunk as often as he pleases, with little loss of character; nay, may let his wife and children starve.' JOHNSON. 'Madam, you must consider, if the mason does get himself drunk, and let his wife and children starve, the parish will oblige him to find security for their maintenance. We have different modes of restraining evil. Stocks for the men, a ducking-stool for women, and a pound for beasts. If we require more perfection from women than from ourselves, it is doing them honour. And women have not the same temptations that we have: they may always live in virtuous company; men must mix in the world indiscriminately. If a woman has no inclination to do what is wrong being secured from it is no restraint to her. I am at liberty to walk into the Thames; but if I were to try it, my friends would restrain me in Bedlam, and I should be obliged to them.'

Dr Mayo having asked Johnson's opinion of Soame

Jenyns's *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*; — JOHNSON. 'I think it a pretty book; not very theological indeed; and there seems to be an affectation of ease and carelessness, as if it were not suitable to his character to be very serious about the matter.' BOSWELL. 'You should like his book, Mrs Knowles, as it maintains, as you *friends* do, that courage is not a Christian virtue.' MRS KNOWLES. 'Yes, indeed, I like him there; but I cannot agree with him, that friendship is not a Christian virtue.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Madam, strictly speaking, he is right. All friendship is preferring the interest of a friend, to the neglect, or, perhaps, against the interest of others; so that an old Greek said, "He that has *friends* has *no friend*." Now Christianity recommends universal benevolence, to consider all men as our brethren, which is contrary to the virtue of friendship, as described by the ancient philosophers. Surely, Madam, your sect must approve of this; for, you call all men *friends*.' MRS KNOWLES. 'We are commanded to do good to all men, "but especially to them who are of the household of Faith."' JOHNSON. 'Well, Madam. The household of Faith is wide enough.' MRS KNOWLES. 'But, Doctor, our Saviour had twelve Apostles, yet there was *one* whom he *loved*. John was called "the disciple whom JESUS loved."' JOHNSON. (with eyes sparkling benignantly,) 'Very well, indeed, Madam. You have said very well.'

From this pleasing subject, he, I know not how or why, made a sudden transition to one upon which he was a violent aggressor; for he said, 'I am willing to love all mankind, *except an American* : ' and his inflammable corruption bursting into horrid fire, he 'breathed out threatenings and slaughter;' calling them, 'Rascals — Robbers — Pirates;' and exclaiming, he'd 'burn and destroy them'. Miss Seward, looking to him with mild but steady astonishment, said, 'Sir, this is an instance that we are always most violent against those whom we have injured.' — He was irritated still more by this delicate and keen reproach; and roared out another tremendous volley, which one might fancy could be heard across the Atlantick. During this tempest I sat in great un-

easiness, lamenting his heat of temper; till, by degrees, I diverted his attention to other topicks.

Mrs Knowles mentioned, as a proselyte to Quakerism, Miss ———, [Jane Harry, natural daughter of Thomas Hibbert] a young lady well known to Dr Johnson, for whom he had shewn much affection; while she ever had, and still retained, a great respect for him. Mrs Knowles at the same time took an opportunity of letting him know 'that the amiable young creature was sorry at finding that he was offended at her leaving the Church of England and embracing a simpler faith;' and, in the gentlest and most persuasive manner, solicited his kind indulgence for what was sincerely a matter of conscience. JOHNSON. (frowning very angrily,) 'Madam, she is an odious wench. She could not have any proper conviction that it was her duty to change her religion, which is the most important of all subjects, and should be studied with all care, and with all the helps we can get. She knew no more of the Church which she left, and that which she embraced, than she did of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaick systems.' MRS KNOWLES. 'She had the New Testament before her.' JOHNSON. 'Madam, she could not understand the New Testament, the most difficult book in the world, for which the study of a life is required.' MRS KNOWLES. 'It is clear as to essentials.' JOHNSON. 'But not as to controversial points. The heathens were easily converted, because they had nothing to give up; but we ought not, without very strong conviction indeed, to desert the religion in which we have been educated. That is the religion given you, the religion in which it may be said Providence has placed you. If you live conscientiously in that religion, you may be safe. But error is dangerous indeed, if you err when you choose a religion for yourself.' MRS KNOWLES. 'Must we then go by implicit faith?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Madam, the greatest part of our knowledge is implicit faith; and as to religion, have we heard all that a disciple of Confucius, all that a Mahometan, can say for himself?' He then rose again into

passion, and attacked the young proselyte in the severest terms of reproach, so that both the ladies seemed to be much shocked.

We remained together till it was pretty late. Notwithstanding occasional explosions of violence, we were all delighted upon the whole with Johnson. I compared him at this time to a warm West-Indian climate, where you have a bright sun, quick vegetation, luxuriant foliage, luscious fruits; but where the same heat sometimes produces thunder, lightning, earthquakes, in a terrible degree.

April 17, being Good Friday, I waited on Johnson, as usual. I observed at breakfast that although it was a part of his abstemious discipline on this most solemn fast, to take no milk in his tea, yet when Mrs Desmoulins inadvertently poured it in, he did not reject it.

I told him that at a gentleman's [Langton's] house where there was thought to be such extravagance or bad management, that he was living much beyond his income, his lady had objected to the cutting of a pickled mango, and that I had taken an opportunity to ask the price of it, and found it was only two shillings; so here was a very poor saving. JOHNSON. 'Sir, that is the blundering oeconomy of a narrow understanding. It is stopping one hole in a sieve.'

And now I am to give a pretty full account of one of the most curious incidents in Johnson's life.

It was in Butcher-row that this happened. Mr [Oliver] Edwards, who was a decent-looking elderly man in grey clothes, and a wig of many curls, accosted Johnson with familiar confidence, knowing who he was, while Johnson returned his salutation with a courteous formality, as to a stranger. But as soon as Edwards had brought to his recollection their having been at Pembroke-College together nine-and-forty years ago, he seemed much pleased, asked where he lived, and said he should be glad to see him in Bolt-court. EDWARDS. 'Ah, Sir! we are old men now.' JOHNSON. (who never liked to think of being old,) 'Don't let us discourage one another.' EDWARDS. 'Why, Doctor, you

look stout and hearty, I am happy to see you so; for the news papers told us you were very ill.' JOHNSON. 'Ay, Sir, they are always telling lies of *us old fellows*.'

Wishing to be present at more of so singular a conversation as that between two fellow-collegians, who had lived forty years in London without ever having chanced to meet, I whispered to Mr Edwards that Dr Johnson was going home, and that he had better accompany him now. So Edwards walked along with us, I eagerly assisting to keep up the conversation. Mr Edwards informed Dr Johnson that he had practised long as a solicitor in Chancery, but that he now lived in the country upon a little farm, about sixty acres, just by Stevenage in Hertfordshire, and that he came to London, generally twice a week. Johnson appearing to be in a reverie, Mr Edwards addressed himself to me, and expatiated on the pleasure of living in the country. BOSWELL. 'I have no notion of this, Sir. What you have to entertain you, is, I think, exhausted in half an hour.' EDWARDS. 'What? don't you love to have hope realized? I see my grass, and my corn, and my trees growing. Now, for instance, I am curious to see if this frost has not nipped my fruit-trees.' JOHNSON. (who we did not imagine was attending,) 'You find, Sir, you have fears as well as hopes.'

When we got to Dr Johnson's house, and were seated in his library, the dialogue went on admirably. EDWARDS. 'Sir, I remember you would not let us say *prodigious* at College. For even then, Sir, (turning to me,) he was delicate in language, and we all feared him.' JOHNSON. (to Edwards,) 'From your having practised the law long, Sir, I presume you must be rich.' EDWARDS. 'No, Sir; I got a good deal of money; but I had a number of poor relations to whom I gave a great part of it.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you have been rich in the most valuable sense of the word.' EDWARDS. 'But I shall not die rich.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, sure, Sir, it is better to *live* rich than to *die* rich.' EDWARDS. 'I wish I had continued at College.' JOHNSON. 'Why do you wish that, Sir?' EDWARDS. 'Because I think I should have had a much easier life than mine has been. I should have been a parson,

and had a good living, like [Matthew] Bloxam and several others, and lived comfortably.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, the life of a parson, of a conscientious clergyman, is not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather have Chancery suits upon my hands than the cure of souls. No, Sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life.' Here taking himself up all of a sudden, he exclaimed, 'O! Mr Edwards! I'll convince you that I recollect you. Do you remember our drinking together at an alehouse near Pembroke gate? At that time, you told me of the Eton boy, who, when verses on our SAVIOUR's turning water into wine were prescribed as an exercise, brought up a single line, which was highly admired, -

"*Vidit et erubuit lymphæ pudica DEUM,*" [The modest nymph saw her god and blushed.]

and I told you of another fine line in Camden's *Remains*, an eulogy upon one of our Kings, who was succeeded by his son, a prince of equal merit : -

"*Mira cano, Sol occubuit, nox nulla secuta est.*"' [I sing of a marvel : the sun set but no night followed.]

EDWARDS. 'You are a philosopher, Dr Johnson. I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in.' - All the eminent men to whom I have mentioned this, have thought it an exquisite trait of character. The truth is, that philosophy, like religion, is too generally supposed to be hard and severe, at least so grave as to exclude all gaiety.

EDWARDS. 'I have been twice married, Doctor. You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have a wife.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and (in a solemn, tender, faltering tone) I have known what it was to *lose a wife*. - It had almost broke my heart.'

EDWARDS. 'How do you live, Sir? For my part, I must have my regular meals, and a glass of good wine. I find I

require it.' JOHNSON. 'I now drink no wine, Sir. Early in life I drank wine : for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal.' EDWARDS. 'Some hogsheads, I warrant you.' JOHNSON. 'I then had a severe illness, and left it off, and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one thing rather than another, nor from one kind of weather rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a difference; but I am not one of them. And as to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner, without any inconvenience. I believe it best to eat just as one is hungry : but a man who is in business, or a man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler. I may leave this town and go to Grand Cairo, without being missed here or observed there.' EDWARDS. 'Don't you eat supper, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir.' EDWARDS. 'For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which one must pass, in order to get to bed.'

JOHNSON. 'You are a lawyer, Mr Edwards. Lawyers know life practically. A bookish man should always have them to converse with. They have what he wants.' EDWARDS. 'I am grown old : I am sixty-five.' JOHNSON. 'I shall be sixty-eight next birth-day. Come, Sir, drink water, and put in for a hundred.'

Mr Edwards mentioned a gentleman [the Rev. James Phipps] who had left his whole fortune to Pembroke College. JOHNSON. 'Whether to leave one's whole fortune to a College be right, must depend upon circumstances. I would leave the interest of the fortune I bequeathed to a College to my relations or my friends, for their lives. It is the same thing to a College, which is a permanent society, whether it gets the money now or twenty years hence; and I would wish to make my relations or friends feel the benefit of it.'

This interview confirmed my opinion of Johnson's most humane and benevolent heart. His cordial and placid behaviour to an old fellow-collegian, a man so different from himself; and his telling him that he would go down to his farm and visit him, showed a kindliness of disposition very

rare at an advanced age. He observed, 'how wonderful it was that they had both been in London forty years, without having ever once met, and both walkers in the street too!' Mr Edwards, when going away, again recurred to his consciousness of senility, and looking full in Johnson's face, said to him, 'You'll find in Dr [Edward] Young ['s *Night Thoughts*],

"O my coevals! remnants of yourselves!"¹

Johnson did not relish this at all; but shook his head with impatience. Edwards walked off, seemingly high pleased with the honour of having been thus noticed by Dr Johnson. When he was gone, I said to Johnson, I thought him but a weak man. JOHNSON. 'Why, yes, Sir. Here is a man who has passed through life without experience: yet I would rather have him with me than a more sensible man who will not talk readily. The man is always willing to say what he has to say.'⁵

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Mr Edwards had said to me aside, that Dr Johnson should have been of a profession. I repeated the remark to Johnson that I might have his own thoughts on the subject. JOHNSON. 'Sir, it *would* have been better that I had been of a profession. I ought to have been a lawyer.' BOSWELL. 'I do not think, Sir, it would have been better, for we should not have had the *English Dictionary*.' JOHNSON. 'But you would have had *Reports*.' BOSWELL. 'Ay; but there would not have been another, who could have written the *Dictionary*. There have been many very good Judges. Suppose you had been Lord Chancellor; you would have delivered opinions with more extent of mind, and in a more ornamented manner, than perhaps any Chancellor ever did, or ever will do. But, I believe, causes have been as judiciously decided as you could have done.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir. Property has been as well settled.'

Johnson, however, had a noble ambition floating in his mind, and had, undoubtedly, often speculated on the possi-

bility of his supereminent powers being rewarded in this great and liberal country by the highest honours of the state. Sir William Scott informs me, that upon the death of the late Lord Lichfield, who was Chancellor of the University of Oxford, he said to Johnson, 'What a pity it is, Sir, that you did not follow the profession of the law. You might have been Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, and attained to the dignity of the peerage; and now that the title of Lichfield, your native city, is extinct, you might have had it.' Johnson, upon this, seemed much agitated; and, in an angry tone, exclaimed, 'Why will you vex me by suggesting this, when it is too late?'

Yet no man had a higher notion of the dignity of literature than Johnson, or was more determined in maintaining the respect which he justly considered as due to it. Of this, besides the general tenor of his conduct in society, some characteristic instances may be mentioned.

He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that once when he dined in a numerous company of booksellers, where the room being small, the head of the table, at which he sat, was almost close to the fire, he persevered in suffering a great deal of inconvenience from the heat, rather than quit his place, and let one of them sit above him.

Goldsmith, in his diverting simplicity, complained one day, in a mixed company, of Lord Camden. 'I met him (said he,) at Lord Clare's house in the country, and he took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man.' The company having laughed heartily, Johnson stood forth in defence of his friend. 'Nay, Gentlemen, (said he,) Dr Goldsmith is in the right. A nobleman ought to have made up to such a man as Goldsmith; and I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him.'

Nor could he patiently endure to hear that such respect as he thought due only to higher intellectual qualities, should be bestowed on men of slighter, though perhaps more amusing talents. I told him, that one morning, when I went to breakfast with Garrick, who was very vain of his intimacy with Lord Camden, he accosted me thus: — 'Pray now, did

you – did you meet a little lawyer turning the corner, eh?” – ‘No, Sir, (said I.) Pray what do you mean by the question?’ – ‘Why, (replied Garrick, with an affected indifference, yet as if standing on tip-toe,) Lord Camden has this moment left me. We have had a long walk together.’ JOHNSON. ‘Well, Sir, Garrick talked very properly. Lord Camden *was a little lawyer* to be associating so familiarly with a player.’

Sir Joshua Reynolds observed, with great truth, that Johnson considered Garrick to be as it were his *property*. He would allow no man either to blame or to praise Garrick in his presence, without contradicting him.

On Saturday, April [18], I drank tea with him. The Gentleman who had dined with us at Dr Percy’s [the Rev. Norton Nicholls] came in. Johnson attacked the Americans with intemperate vehemence of abuse. I said something in their favour; and added, that I was always sorry when he talked on that subject. This, it seems, exasperated him; though he said nothing at the time. The cloud was charged with sulphureous vapour, which was afterwards to burst in thunder. – We talked of a gentleman [Langton] who was running out his fortune in London; and I said, ‘We must get him out of it. All his friends must quarrel with him, and that will soon drive him away.’ JOHNSON. ‘Nay, Sir; we’ll send *you* to him. If your company does not drive a man out of his house, nothing will.’ This was a horrible shock, for which there was no visible cause. I afterwards asked him why he had said so harsh a thing. JOHNSON. ‘Because, Sir, you made me angry about the Americans.’ BOSWELL. ‘But why did you not take your revenge directly?’ JOHNSON. (smiling,) ‘Because, Sir, I had nothing ready. A man cannot strike till he has his weapons.’ This was a candid and pleasant confession.

On Tuesday, April 28, he was engaged to dine at General Paoli’s. I called on him, and accompanied him in a hackney-coach. We stopped first at the bottom of Hedge-lane, into which he went to leave a letter, ‘with good news for a poor man [Mauritius Lowe] in distress’, as he told me.⁶ We

stopped again at Wirgman's, the well-known *toy-shop*, in St James's-street, at the corner of St James's-place, to which he had been directed, but not clearly, for he searched about some time, and could not find it at first; and said, 'To direct one only to a corner shop is *toying* with one.' I suppose he meant this as a play upon the word *toy*: it was the first time that I knew him stoop to such sport. After he had been some time in the shop, he sent for me to come out of the coach, and help him to choose a pair of silver buckles, as those he had were too small. Probably this alteration in dress had been suggested by Mrs Thrale, by associating with whom, his external appearance was much improved. He got better cloaths; and the dark colour, from which he never deviated, was enlivened by metal buttons. His wigs, too, were much better; and during their travels in France, he was furnished with a Paris-made wig, of handsome construction. This choosing of silver buckles was a negociation: 'Sir, (said he,) I will not have the ridiculous large ones now in fashion; and I will give no more than a guinea for a pair.' Such were the *principles* of the business; and, after some examination, he was fitted. As we drove along, I found him in a talking humour, of which I availed myself. BOSWELL. 'I was this morning in Ridley's shop, Sir; and was told, that the collection called *Johnsoniana* has sold very much.' JOHNSON. 'Yet the *Journey to the Hebrides* has not had a great sale.' BOSWELL. 'That is strange.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; for in that book I have told the world a great deal that they did not know before.'

BOSWELL. 'I drank chocolate, Sir, this morning with Mr [Francis] Eld; and, to my no small surprize, found him to be a *Staffordshire Whig*, a being which I did not believe had existed.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, there are rascals in all countries.'

At General Paoli's were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr Langton, Marchese Gherardi of Lombardy, and Mr John Spottiswoode the younger, of Spottiswoode, the solicitor.

We talked of drinking wine. JOHNSON. 'I require wine, only when I am alone. I have then often wished for it, and

often taken it.' SPOTTISWOODE. 'What, by way of a companion, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'To get rid of myself, to send myself away. Wine gives great pleasure; and every pleasure is of itself a good. It is a good, unless counterbalanced by evil. A man may have a strong reason not to drink wine; and that may be greater than the pleasure. Wine makes a man better pleased with himself. I do not say that it makes him more pleasing to others. BOSWELL. 'The great difficulty of resisting wine is from benevolence. For instance, a good worthy man asks you to taste his wine, which he has had twenty years in his cellar.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, all this notion about benevolence arises from a man's imagining himself to be of more importance to others, than he really is. They don't care a farthing whether he drinks wine or not.' SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. 'Yes, they do for the time.' JOHNSON. 'For the time! - If they care this minute, they forget it the next.'

I was at this time myself a water-drinker, upon trial, by Johnson's recommendation. JOHNSON. 'Boswell is a bolder combatant than Sir Joshua: he argues for wine without the help of wine; but Sir Joshua with it.' SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. 'But to please one's company is a strong motive.' JOHNSON. (who, from drinking only water, supposed every body who drank wine to be elevated,) 'I won't argue any more with you, Sir. You are too far gone.' SIR JOSHUA. 'I should have thought so indeed, Sir, had I made such a speech as you have now done.' JOHNSON. (drawing himself in, and, I really thought blushing,) 'Nay, don't be angry. I did not mean to offend you.'

Next day, Thursday, April 30, I found him at home by himself. JOHNSON. 'Mrs Thrale's mother said of me what flattered me much. A clergyman was complaining of want of society in the country where he lived; and said, "They talk of *runts*;" (that is, young cows). "Sir, (said Mrs Salusbury,) Mr Johnson would learn to talk of *runts*:" meaning that I was a man who would make the most of my situation, whatever it was.' He added, 'I think myself a very polite man.'

On Saturday, May 2, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where there was a very large company, and a great deal of conversation; but owing to some circumstance which I cannot now recollect, I have no record of any part of it, except that there were several people there by no means of the Johnsonian school; so that less attention was paid to him than usual, which put him out of humour; and upon some imaginary offence from me, he attacked me with such rudeness, that I was vexed and angry, because it gave those persons an opportunity of enlarging upon his supposed ferocity, and ill treatment of his best friends. I was so much hurt, and had my pride so much roused, that I kept away from him for a week; and, perhaps, might have kept away much longer, nay, gone to Scotland without seeing him again, had not we fortunately met and been reconciled. To such unhappy chances are human friendships liable.

On Friday, May 8, I dined with him at Mr Langton's. I was reserved and silent, which I suppose he perceived, and might recollect the cause. After dinner when Mr Langton was called out of the room, and we were by ourselves, he drew his chair near to mine, and said, in a tone of conciliating courtesy, 'Well, how have you done?' BOSWELL. 'Sir, you have made me very uneasy by your behaviour to me when we were last at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. You know, my dear Sir, no man has a greater respect and affection for you, or would sooner go to the end of the world to serve you. Now to treat me so —' He insisted that I had interrupted him, which I assured him was not the case; and proceeded — 'But why treat me so before people who neither love you nor me?' JOHNSON. 'Well, I am sorry for it. I'll make it up to you twenty different ways, as you please.' BOSWELL. 'I said to-day to Sir Joshua, when he observed that you *tossed* me sometimes — I don't care how often, or how high he tosses me, when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground: but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present. — I think this is a pretty good image, Sir.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is one of the happiest I have ever heard.'

Johnson called the East-Indians barbarians. BOSWELL. 'You will except the Chinese, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir.' BOSWELL. 'Have they not arts?' JOHNSON. 'They have pottery.' BOSWELL. 'What do you say to the written characters of their language?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, they have not an alphabet. They have not been able to form what all other nations have formed.' BOSWELL. 'There is more learning in their language than in any other, from the immense number of their characters.' JOHNSON. 'It is only more difficult from its rudeness; as there is more labour in hewing down a tree with a stone than with an axe.'

On Saturday, May 9, we fulfilled our purpose of dining by ourselves at the Mitre, according to old custom. There was, on these occasions, a little circumstance of kind attention to Mrs Williams, which must not be omitted. Before coming out, and leaving her to dine alone, he gave her her choice of a chicken, a sweetbread, or any other little nice thing, which was carefully sent to her from the tavern, ready-drest.

Our conversation to-day, I know not how, turned, (I think for the only time at any length, during our long acquaintance,) upon the sensual intercourse between the sexes, the delight of which he ascribed chiefly to imagination. 'Were it not for imagination, Sir, (said he,) a man would be as happy in the arms of a chambermaid as of a Duchess. But such is the adventitious charm of fancy, that we find men who have violated the best principles of society, and ruined their fame and their fortune, that they might possess a woman of rank.'

On Tuesday, May 19, I was to set out for Scotland in the evening. He was engaged to dine with me at Mr Dilly's, I waited upon him to remind him of his appointment and attend him thither; he gave me some salutary counsel, and recommended vigorous resolution against any deviation from moral duty. BOSWELL. 'But you would not have me to bind myself by a solemn obligation?' JOHNSON. (much agitated,) 'What! a vow - O, no, Sir, a vow is a horrible thing, it is a snare for sin. The man who cannot go to Heaven without a vow - may go -' Here, standing erect, in the middle of his

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library, and rolling grand, his pause was truly a curious compound of the solemn and the ludicrous; he half-whistled in his usual way, when pleasant, and he paused, as if checked by religious awe. Methought he would have added – to Hell – but was restrained.

PART VIII

1779-81

In 1779, Johnson gave the world a luminous proof that the vigour of his mind in all its faculties, whether memory, judgement, or imagination, was not in the least abated; for this year came out the first four volumes of his *Prefaces, biographical and critical, to the most eminent of the English Poets*.

[I arrived in London] on Monday, March 15, and next morning at a late hour, found Dr Johnson sitting over his tea, attended by Mrs Desmoulins, Mr Levett, and a clergyman, [the Rev. William Tasker] who had come to submit some poetical pieces to his revision. It is wonderful what a number and variety of writers, some of them even unknown to him, prevailed on his good-nature to look over their works, and suggest corrections and improvements.

He said he expected to be attacked on account of his *Lives of the Poets*. 'However (said he,) I would rather be attacked than unnoticed. For the worst thing you can do to an authour is to be silent as to his works. An assault upon a town is a bad thing; but starving it is still worse; an assault may be unsuccessful; you may have more men killed than you kill; but if you starve the town, you are sure of victory.'

On Wednesday, March 31, when I visited him, and confessed an excess of which I had very seldom been guilty; that I had spent a whole night in playing at cards, and that I could not look back on it with satisfaction; instead of a harsh animadversion, he mildly said, 'Alas, Sir, on how few things can we look back with satisfaction.'

On Wednesday, April 7, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. I have not marked what company was there. Johnson harangued upon the qualities of different liquors; and spoke with great contempt of claret, as so weak, that 'a

man would be drowned by it before it made him drunk.' He was persuaded to drink one glass of it, that he might judge, not from recollection, which might be dim, but from immediate sensation. He shook his head, and said, 'Poor stuff ! No, Sir, claret is the liquor for boys ; port, for men ; but he who aspires to be a hero (smiling,) must drink brandy.'

I reminded him how heartily he and I used to drink wine together, when we were first acquainted ; and how I used to have a head-ache after sitting up with him. He did not like to have this recalled, or, perhaps, thinking that I boasted improperly, resolved to have a witty stroke at me : 'Nay, Sir, it was not the *wine* that made your head ache, but the *sense* that I put into it.' BOSWELL. 'What, Sir ! will sense make the head ache ?' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, (with a smile,) when it is not used to it.'

On Monday, October 4, I called at his house before he was up. He sent for me to his bedside, and expressed his satisfaction at this incidental meeting, with as much vivacity as if he had been in the gaiety of youth. He called briskly, 'Frank, go and get coffee, and let us breakfast *in splendour*.'

On Sunday, October 10, we dined together at Mr Strahan's.

We talked of the state of the poor in London. — JOHNSON. 'Saunders Welch, the Justice, who was once High-Constable of Holborn, and had the best opportunities of knowing the state of the poor, told me, that I under-rated the number, when I computed that twenty a week, that is, above a thousand a year, died of hunger ; not absolutely of immediate hunger ; but of the wasting and other diseases which are consequences of hunger. This happens only in so large a place as London, where people are not known. What we are told about the great sums got by begging is not true : the trade is overstocked. And you may depend upon it, there are many who cannot get work. A particular kind of manufacture fails : those who have been used to work at it, can, for some time, work at nothing else. You meet a man begging ; you charge him with idleness : he says, "I am

willing to labour. Will you give me work?" – "I cannot." – "Why, then, you have no right to charge me with idleness." "

We left Mr Strahan's at seven, as Johnson had said he intended to go to evening prayers. As we walked along, he complained of a little gout in his toe, and said, 'I shan't go to prayers to-night; I shall go to-morrow: Whenever I miss church on Sunday, I resolve to go another day. But I do not always do it.'

BOSWELL. 'By associating with you, Sir, I am always getting an accession of wisdom. But perhaps a man, after knowing his own character – the limited strength of his own mind, should not be desirous of having too much wisdom.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, be as wise as you can. You may be wise in your study in the morning, and gay in company at a tavern in the evening. Every man is to take care of his own wisdom and his own virtue, without minding too much what others think.'

He said, 'Dodsley first mentioned to me the scheme of an English Dictionary; but I had long thought of it.' BOSWELL. 'You did not know what you were undertaking.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, I knew very well what I was undertaking, – and very well how to do it, – and have done it very well.'

What I have preserved of his conversation during the remainder of my stay in London at this time, is only what follows:

He, I know not why, shewed upon all occasions an aversion to go to Ireland, where I proposed to him that we should make a tour. JOHNSON. 'It is the last place where I should wish to travel.' BOSWELL. 'Should you not like to see Dublin, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir; Dublin is only a worse capital.' BOSWELL. 'Is not the Giant's-Causeway worth seeing?' JOHNSON. 'Worth seeing? yes; but not worth going to see.'

Yet he had a kindness for the Irish nation, and thus generously expressed himself to a gentleman from that country, on the subject of an UNION which artful Politicians have often had in view – 'Do not make an union with us, Sir. We

should unite with you, only to rob you. We should have robbed the Scotch, if they had had any thing of which we could have robbed them.'

A foreign minister of no very high talents, who had been in his company for a considerable time quite overlooked, happened luckily to mention that he had read some of his *Rambler* in Italian, and admired it much. This pleased him greatly, and finding that this minister gave such proof of his taste, he was all attention to him, and on the first remark which he made, however simple, exclaimed, 'The Ambassador says well – His Excellency observes –' And then he expanded and enriched the little that had been said, in so strong a manner, that it appeared something of consequence. This was exceedingly entertaining to the company who were present, and many a time afterwards it furnished a pleasant topick of merriment: '*The Ambassador says well,*' became a laughable term of applause, when no mighty matter had been expressed.

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Being disappointed in my hopes of meeting Johnson this year [1780]¹ so that I could hear none of his admirable sayings, I shall compensate for this want by inserting a collection of them, for which I am indebted to my worthy friend Mr Langton, whose kind communications have been separately interwoven in many parts of this work.

'Having asked Mr Langton if his father and mother had sat for their pictures, which he thought it right for each generation of a family to do, and being told they had opposed it, he said, "Sir, among the anfractuosities of the human mind, I know not if it may not be one, that there is a superstitious reluctance to sit for a picture."'

'When in good humour he would talk of his own writings with a wonderful frankness and candour, and would even criticise them with the closest severity. One day, having read over one of his *Ramblers*, Mr Langton asked him, how he liked that paper; he shook his head, and answered, "too wordy." At another time, when one was reading his tragedy

of *Irene* to a company at a house in the country, he left the room; and somebody having asked him the reason of this, he replied, "Sir, I thought it had been better."

'Talking of a point of delicate scrupulosity of moral conduct, he said to Mr Langton, "Men of harder minds than ours will do many things from which you and I would shrink; yet, Sir, they will, perhaps, do more good in life than we. But let us try to help one another. If there be a wrong twist it may be set right. It is not probable that two people can be wrong the same way."'

'He used at one time to go occasionally to the green room of Drury-lane Theatre, where he was much regarded by the players, and was very easy and facetious with them. He had a very high opinion of Mrs Clive's comick powers, and conversed more with her than with any of them. He said, "Clive, Sir, is a good thing to sit by; she always understands what you say." And she said of him, "I love to sit by Dr Johnson; he always entertains me."

'He would allow no settled indulgence of idleness upon principle, and always repelled every attempt to urge excuses for it. A friend one day suggested, that it was not wholesome to study soon after dinner. JOHNSON. "Ah, Sir, don't give way to such a fancy. At one time of my life I had taken it into my head that it was not wholesome to study between breakfast and dinner."'

'His affection for Topham Beauclerk was so great, that when Beauclerk was labouring under that severe illness which at last occasioned his death, Johnson said, (with a voice faltering with emotion,) "Sir, I would walk to the extent of the diameter of the earth to save Beauclerk."'

'Talking of Gray's *Odes*, he said, "They are forced plants raised in a hot-bed; and they are poor plants; they are but cucumbers after all." A gentleman present, who had been running down Ode-writing in general, as a bad species of poetry, unluckily said, "Had they been literally cucumbers, they had been better things than Odes." - "Yes, Sir, (said Johnson,) for a *hog*."

'His distinction of the different degrees of attainment of

learning was thus marked upon two occasions. Of Queen Elizabeth he said, "She had learning enough to have given dignity to a bishop;" and of Mr Thomas Davies he said, "Sir, Davies has learning enough to give credit to a clergyman."

'An eminent foreigner, when he was shewn the British Museum, was very troublesome with many absurd inquiries. "Now there, Sir, (said he,) is the difference between an Englishman and a Frenchman. A Frenchman must be always talking, whether he knows any thing of the matter or not; an Englishman is content to say nothing, when he has nothing to say."

'His unjust contempt for foreigners was, indeed, extreme. One evening, at old Slaughter's coffee-house, when a number of them were talking loud about little matters, he said, "Does not this confirm old [Hugo] Meynell's observation – *For any thing I see, foreigners are fools.*"'

'He used frequently to observe, that men might be very eminent in a profession, without our perceiving any particular power of mind in them in conversation. "It seems strange (said he,) that a man should see so far to the right, who sees so short a way to the left. Burke is the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general frame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topick you please, he is ready to meet you."

'Mr Langton, when a very young man, read Dodsley's *Cleone, a Tragedy*, to him, not aware of his extreme impatience to be read to. As it went on he turned his face to the back of his chair, and put himself into various attitudes, which marked his uneasiness. At the end of an act, however, he said, "Come let's have some more, let's go into the slaughter-house again, Lanky. But I am afraid there is more blood than brains."

'In the latter part of his life, in order to satisfy himself whether his mental activities were impaired, he resolved that he would try to learn a new language, and fixed upon the Low Dutch, for that purpose, and this he continued till he had read about one half of 'Thomas à Kempis'; and finding that there appeared no abatement of his power of acquisi-

tion, he then desisted, as thinking the experiment had been duly tried. Mr Burke justly observed, that this was not the most vigorous trial, Low Dutch being a language so near to our own; had it been one of the languages entirely different, he might have been very soon satisfied.'

'Mr Langton and he having gone to see a Freemason's funeral procession, when they were at Rochester, and some solemn musick being played on French horns, he said, "This is the first time that I have ever been affected by musical sounds."'

'Goldsmith had long a visionary project, that some time or other when his circumstances should be easier, he would go to Aleppo, in order to acquire a knowledge as far as might be, of any arts peculiar to the East, and introduce them into Britain. When this was talked of in Dr Johnson's company, he said, "Of all men Goldsmith is the most unfit to go out upon such an inquiry; for he is utterly ignorant of such arts as we already possess, and consequently could not know what would be accessions to our present stock of mechanical knowledge. Sir, he would bring home a grinding-barrow, which you see in every street in London, and think that he had furnished a wonderful improvement."'

'Greek, Sir, (said he,) is like lace; every man gets as much of it as he can.'

'It is well known that there was formerly a rude custom for those who were sailing upon the Thames, to accost each other as they passed, in the most abusive language they could invent, generally, however, with as much satirical humour as they were capable of producing. Johnson was once eminently successful in this species of contest; a fellow having attacked him with some coarse raillery, Johnson answered him thus, "Sir, your wife, *under pretence of keeping a bawdy-house*, is a receiver of stolen goods."'

'Beauclerk having observed to him of one of their friends, that he was awkward at counting money. "Why, Sir, (said Johnson,) I am likewise awkward at counting money. But then, Sir, the reason is plain; I have had very little money to count."'

'He had an abhorrence of affectation. Talking of old Mr Langton, of whom he said, "Sir, you will seldom see such a gentleman, such are his stores of literature, such his knowledge in divinity, and such his exemplary life;" he added, "and Sir, he has no grimace, no gesticulation, no bursts of admiration on trivial occasions; he never embraces you with an overacted cordiality."'

'When Mr [Agmondesham] Vesey was proposed as a member of the LITERARY CLUB, Mr Burke began by saying that he was a man of gentle manners. "Sir, (said Johnson,) you need say no more. When you have said a man of gentle manners; you have said enough."'

'Of Dr Goldsmith he said, "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had."'

'Depend upon it, said he, that if a man *talks* of his misfortunes, there is something in them that is not disagreeable to him; for where there is nothing but pure misery, there never is any recourse to the mention of it.'

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1781. ÆTAT. 72.] — In 1781 Johnson at last completed his *Lives of the Poets*, of which he gives this account: 'Some time in March I finished the *Lives of the Poets*, which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste.' In a memorandum previous to this, he says of them: 'Written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety.'

This is the work which of all Dr Johnson's writings will perhaps be read most generally, and with most pleasure. Philology and biography were his favourite pursuits, and those who lived most in intimacy with him, heard him upon all occasions, when there was a proper opportunity, take delight in expatiating upon the various merits of the English Poets: upon the niceties of their characters, and the events of their progress through the world which they contributed to illuminate. His mind was so full of that kind of information, and it was so well arranged in his memory, that in performing what he had undertaken in this way, he had little

more to do than to put his thoughts upon paper, exhibiting first each Poet's life, and then subjoining a critical examination of his genius and works. But when he began to write, the subject swelled in such a manner, that instead of prefaces to each poet, of no more than a few pages, as he had originally intended, he produced an ample, rich, and most entertaining view of them in every respect. The booksellers, justly sensible of the great additional value of the copy-right, presented him with another hundred pounds, over and above two hundred, for which his agreement was to furnish such prefaces as he thought fit.

On Monday, March 19, I arrived in London, and on Tuesday, the 20th, met him in Fleet-street, walking, or rather indeed moving along; for his peculiar march is thus described in a very just and picturesque manner, in a short *Life*² of him published very soon after his death: — 'When he walked the streets, what with the constant roll of his head, and the concomitant motion of his body, he appeared to make his way by that motion, independent of his feet.' That he was often much stared at while he advanced in this manner, may easily be believed; but it was not safe to make sport of one so robust as he was. Mr Langton saw him one day, in a fit of absence, by a sudden start, drive the load off a porter's back, and walk forward briskly, without being conscious of what he had done. The porter was very angry, but stood still, and eyed the huge figure with much earnestness, till he was satisfied that his wisest course was to be quiet, and take up his burthen again.

Our accidental meeting in the street after a long separation was a pleasing surprize to us both. He stepped aside with me into Falcon-court, and made kind inquiries about my family, and as we were in a hurry going different ways, I promised to call on him next day; he said he was engaged to go out in the morning. 'Early, Sir?' said I. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, a London morning does not go with the sun.'

I waited on him next evening, and he gave me a great portion of his original manuscript of his *Lives of the Poets*, which he had preserved for me.

I found on visiting his friend, Mr Thrale, that he was now very ill, and had removed, I suppose by the solicitation of Mrs Thrale, to a house in Grosvenor-square. I was sorry to see him sadly changed in his appearance.

He told me I might now have the pleasure to see Dr Johnson drink wine again, for he had lately returned to it. When I mentioned this to Johnson, he said, 'I drink it now sometimes, but not socially.' The first evening that I was with him at Thrale's, I observed he poured a quantity of it into a large glass, and swallowed it greedily. Every thing about his character and manners was forcible and violent; there never was any moderation; many a day did he fast, many a year did he refrain from wine; but when he did eat, it was voraciously; when he did drink wine, it was copiously. He could practise abstinence, but not temperance.

Mrs Thrale and I had a dispute, whether Shakspeare or Milton had drawn the most admirable picture of a man. I was for Shakspeare; Mrs Thrale for Milton; and after a fair hearing, Johnson decided for my opinion.

He said, 'Mrs Montagu has dropt me. Now, Sir, there are people whom one should like very well to drop, but would not wish to be dropped by.' He certainly was vain of the society of ladies, and could make himself very agreeable to them, when he chose it; Sir Joshua Reynolds agreed with me that he could. Mr Gibbon, with his usual sneer, controverted it, perhaps in resentment of Johnson's having talked with some disgust of his ugliness, which one would think a *philosopher* would not mind.

Johnson's profound reverence for the Hierarchy made him expect from bishops the highest degree of decorum; he was offended even at their going to taverns; 'A bishop (said he,) has nothing to do at a tippling-house. It is not indeed immoral in him to go to a tavern; neither would it be immoral in him to whip a top in Grosvenor-square. But, if he did, I hope the boys would fall upon him and apply the whip to him.'

Nor was it only in the dignitaries of the Church that Johnson required a particular decorum and delicacy of be-

haviour; he justly considered that the clergy, as persons set apart for the sacred office of serving at the altar, and impressing the minds of men with the awful concerns of a future state, should be somewhat more serious than the generality of mankind, and have a suitable composure of manners.

Johnson and his friend, Beauclerk, were once together in company with several clergymen, who thought that they should appear to advantage, by assuming the lax jollity of *men of the world*; which, as it may be observed in similar cases, they carried to noisy excess. Johnson, who they expected would be *entertained*, sat grave and silent for some time; at last, turning to Beauclerk, he said, by no means in a whisper, 'This merriment of parsons is mighty offensive.'

On Sunday, April 1, I dined with him at Mr Thrale's.

Mr Thrale appeared very lethargick to-day. I saw him again on Monday evening, at which time he was not thought to be in immediate danger; but early in the morning of Wednesday, the 4th, he expired. Johnson was in the house, and thus mentions the event: 'I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect and benignity.'

Mr Thrale's death was a very essential loss to Johnson, who, although he did not foresee all that afterwards happened, was sufficiently convinced that the comforts which Mr Thrale's family afforded him, would now in a great measure cease. He, however, continued to shew a kind attention to his widow and children as long as it was acceptable; and he took upon him, with a very earnest concern, the office of one of his executors, the importance of which seemed greater than usual to him, from his circumstances having been always such, that he had scarcely any share in the real business of life. His friends of THE CLUB were in hopes that Mr Thrale might have made a liberal provision for him for his life, which, as Mr Thrale left no son, and a very large fortune, it would have been highly to his honour to have done; and, considering Dr Johnson's age, could not have

been of long duration; but he bequeathed him only two hundred pounds, which was the legacy given to each of his executors. I could not but be somewhat diverted by hearing Johnson talk in a pompous manner of his new office, and particularly of the concerns of the brewery, which it was at last resolved should be sold. Lord Lucan tells a very good story, which, if not precisely exact, is certainly characteristic: that when the sale of Thrale's brewery was going forward, Johnson appeared bustling about, with an ink-horn and pen in his button-hole, like an excise-man; and on being asked what he really considered to be the value of the property which was to be disposed of, answered, 'We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich, beyond the dreams of avarice.'

On Friday, April 13, being Good-Friday, I went to St Clement's church with him, as usual. There I saw again his old fellow-collegian, Edwards, to whom I said, 'I think, Sir, Dr Johnson and you meet only at Church.' – 'Sir, (said he,) it is the best place we can meet in, except Heaven, and I hope we shall meet there too.' Dr Johnson told me, that there was very little communication between Edwards and him, after their unexpected renewal of acquaintance. 'But, (said he, smiling), he met me once, and said, "I am told you have written a very pretty book called *The Rambler*." I was unwilling that he should leave the world in total darkness, and sent him a set.'

On Friday, April 20, I spent with him one of the happiest days that I remember to have enjoyed in the whole course of my life. Mrs Garrick, whose grief for the loss of her husband was, I believe, as sincere as wounded affection and admiration could produce, had this day, for the first time since his death, a select party of his friends to dine with her.³ The company was Miss Hannah More, who lived with her, and whom she called her Chaplain; Mrs [Frances] Boscawen, [widow of Admiral the Hon. Edward Boscawen], Mrs Elizabeth Carter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr Burney, Dr Johnson, and myself. We found ourselves very elegantly entertained at her house in the Adelphi, where I have passed many a

pleasing hour with him 'who gladdened life.' She looked very well, talked of her husband with complacency, and while she cast her eyes on his portrait, which hung over the chimney-piece, said, that 'death was now the most agreeable object to her.'

We were all in fine spirits; and I whispered to Mrs Boscawen, 'I believe this is as much as can be made of life.' In addition to a splendid entertainment, we were regaled with Lichfield ale, which had a peculiar appropriated value. Sir Joshua, and Dr Burney, and I, drank cordially of it to Dr Johnson's health; and though he would not join us, he as cordially answered, 'Gentlemen, I wish you all as well as you do me.'

The general effect of this day dwells upon my mind in fond remembrance; but I do not find much conversation recorded. What I have preserved shall be faithfully given.

Sir Joshua Reynolds praised *Mudge's Sermons*. JOHNSON. 'Mudge's Sermons are good, but not practical. He grasps more sense than he can hold; he takes more corn than he can make into meal; he opens a wide prospect, but it is so distant, it is indistinct. I love *Blair's Sermons*. Though the dog is a Scotchman, and a Presbyterian, and every thing he should not be, I was the first to praise them. Such was my candour,' (smiling.) MRS BOSCAWEN. 'Such his great merit to get the better of all your prejudices.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Madam, let us compound the matter; let us ascribe it to my candour, and his merit.'

In the evening we had a large company in the drawing-room.

Talking of a very respectable authour, [Dr John Campbell] he told us a curious circumstance in his life, which was, that he had married a printer's devil. REYNOLDS. 'A printer's devil, Sir! Why, I thought a printer's devil was a creature with a black face and in rags.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir. But I suppose, he had her face washed, and put clean clothes on her. (Then looking very serious, and very earnest.) And she did not disgrace him; the woman had a bottom of good sense.' The word *bottom* thus introduced, was so ludicrous

when contrasted with his gravity, that most of us could not forbear tittering and laughing; though I recollect that the Bishop of Killaloe kept his countenance with perfect steadiness, while Miss Hannah More slyly hid her face behind a lady's back who sat on the same settee with her. His pride could not bear that any expression of his should excite ridicule, when he did not intend it; he therefore resolved to assume and exercise despotick power, glanced sternly around, and calling out in a strong voice, 'Where's the merriment?' Then collecting himself, and looking awful, to make us feel how he could impose restraint, and as it were searching his mind for a still more ludicrous word, he slowly pronounced, 'I say the *woman* was *fundamentally* sensible;' as if he had said, hear this now, and laugh if you dare. We all sat composed as at a funeral.

He and I walked away together; we stopped a little while by the rails of the Adelphi, looking on the Thames, and I said to him with some emotion that I was now thinking of two friends we had lost, who once lived in the buildings behind us, Beauclerk and Garrick. 'Ay, Sir, (said he, tenderly,) and two such friends as cannot be supplied.'

On Tuesday, May 8, I had the pleasure of again dining with him and Mr Wilkes, at Mr Dilly's. No *negociation* was now required to bring them together; for Johnson was so well satisfied with the former interview, that he was very glad to meet Wilkes again. WILKES. 'I have been thinking, Dr Johnson, that there should be a bill brought into parliament that the controverted elections for Scotland should be tried in that country, at their own Abbey of Holy-Rood House, and not here; for the consequence of trying them here is, that we have an inundation of Scotchmen, who come up and never go back again. Now here is Boswell, who is come up upon the election for his own county, which will not last a fortnight.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, I see no reason why they should be tried at all; for, you know, one Scotchman is as good as another.' WILKES. 'Pray, Boswell, how much may be got in a year by an Advocate at the Scotch bar?' BOSWELL. 'I believe two thousand pounds.' WILKES. 'How can

it be possible to spend that money in Scotland?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, the money may be spent in England: but there is a harder question. If one man in Scotland gets possession of two thousand pounds, what remains for all the rest of the nation?' WILKES. 'You know, in the last war, the immense booty which Thurot carried off by the complete plunder of seven Scotch isles; he re-embarked with *three and six-pence*.' Here again Johnson and Wilkes joined in extravagant sportive raillery upon the supposed poverty of Scotland, which I did not think it worth our while to dispute.

He gave us an entertaining account of *Bet Flint*, a woman of the town, who, with some eccentric talents and much effrontery, forced herself upon his acquaintance. 'Bet (said he,) wrote her own Life in verse, which she brought to me, wishing that I would furnish her with a Preface to it. (Laughing.) I used to say of her that she was generally slut and drunkard; occasionally, whore and thief. She had, however, genteel lodgings, a spinnet on which she played, and a boy that walked before her chair. Poor Bet was taken up on a charge of stealing a counterpane, and tried at the Old Bailey. Chief Justice — [Sir John Willes], who loved a wench, summed up favourably, and she was acquitted. After which Bet said, with a gay and satisfied air, 'Now that the counterpane is *my own*, I shall make a petticoat of it.'

About this time it was much the fashion for several ladies to have evening assemblies, where the fair sex might participate in conversation with literary and ingenious men, animated by a desire to please. These societies were denominated *Blue-stocking Clubs*, the origin of which title being little known, it may be worth while to relate it. One of the most eminent members of those societies, when they first commenced, was Mr [Benjamin] Stillingfleet, whose dress was remarkably grave, and in particular it was observed, that he wore blue stockings. Such was the excellence of his conversation, that his absence was felt as so great a loss, that it used to be said, 'We can do nothing without the *blue stockings*;' and thus by degrees the title was established. Johnson was prevailed with to come sometimes into these circles, and

did not think himself too grave even for the lively Miss Monckton (now Countess of Corke), who used to have the finest *bit of blue* at the house of her mother, Lady Galway. Her vivacity enchanted the Sage, and they used to talk together with all imaginable ease. A singular instance happened one evening, when she insisted that some of Sterne's writings were very pathetick. Johnson bluntly denied it. 'I am sure (said she,) they have affected *me*.' 'Why, (said Johnson, smiling, and rolling himself about,) that is, because, dearest, you're a dunce.' When she some time afterwards mentioned this to him, he said with equal truth and politeness; 'Madam, if I had thought so, I certainly should not have said it.'

Another evening Johnson's kind indulgence towards me had a pretty difficult trial. I had dined at the Duke of Montrose's, with a very agreeable party, and his Grace, according to his usual custom, had circulated the bottle very freely. Lord Graham and I went together to Miss Monckton's, where I certainly was in extraordinary spirits, and above all fear or awe. In the midst of a great number of persons of the first rank, amongst whom I recollect with confusion, a noble lady of the most stately decorum, I placed myself next to Johnson, and thinking myself now fully his match, talked to him in a loud and boisterous manner, desirous to let the company know how I could contend with *Ajax*. I particularly remember pressing him upon the value of the pleasures of the imagination, and as an illustration of my argument, asking him, 'What, Sir, supposing I were to fancy that the —— (naming the most charming Duchess in his Majesty's dominions [Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire]) were in love with me, should I not be very happy?' My friend with much address evaded my interrogatories, and kept me as quiet as possible; but it may easily be conceived how he must have felt. However, when a few days afterwards I waited upon him and made an apology, he behaved with the most friendly gentleness.

While I remained in London this year, Johnson and I dined together at several places; but of his conversation dur-

ing this period, I neglected to keep any regular record, and shall therefore insert here some miscellaneous articles which I find in my Johnsonian notes.

His disorderly habits, when 'making provision for the day that was passing over him,' appear from the following anecdote, communicated to me by Mr John Nichols: - 'In the year 1763, a young bookseller, who was an apprentice to Mr Whiston, waited on him with a subscription to his *Shakespeare*: and observing that the Doctor made no entry in any book of the subscriber's name, ventured diffidently to ask, whether he would please to have the gentleman's address, that it might be properly inserted in the printed list of subscribers. '*I shall print no list of subscribers;*' said Johnson, with great abruptness: but almost immediately recollecting himself, added, very complacently, 'Sir, I have two very cogent reasons for not printing any list of subscribers; - one, that I have lost all the names, - the other, that I have spent all the money.'

Johnson could not brook appearing to be worsted in argument, even when he had taken the wrong side, to shew the force and dexterity of his talents. When, therefore, he perceived that his opponent gained ground, he had recourse to some sudden mode of robust sophistry. Once when I was pressing upon him with visible advantage, he stopped me thus: - 'My dear Boswell, let's have no more of this; you'll make nothing of it. I'd rather have you whistle a Scotch tune.'

I asked him if he was not dissatisfied with having so small a share of wealth, and none of those distinctions in the state which are the objects of ambition. He had only a pension of three hundred a year. Why was he not in such circumstances as to keep his coach? Why had he not some considerable office? JOHNSON. 'Sir, I have never complained of the world; nor do I think that I have reason to complain. It is rather to be wondered at that I have so much. My pension is more out of the usual course of things than any instance that I have known. Here, Sir, was a man avowedly no friend to Government at the time, who got a pension without ask-

ing for it. I never courted the great; they sent for me; but I think they now give me up. They are satisfied; they have seen enough of me.'

His noble friend, Lord Elibank, well observed, that if a great man procured an interview with Johnson, and did not wish to see him more, it shewed a mere idle curiosity, and a wretched want of relish for extraordinary powers of mind. Mrs Thrale justly and wittily accounted for such conduct by saying, that Johnson's conversation was by much too strong for a person accustomed to obsequiousness and flattery; it was *mustard in a young child's mouth!*

PART IX

1782-3

1782. ÆTAT. 73.] – In 1782, his complaints increased, and the history of his life this year, is little more than a mournful recital of the variations of his illness, in the midst of which, however, it will appear from his letters, that the powers of his mind were in no degree impaired.

In one of his memorandum-books in my possession, is the following entry : – ‘January 20, Sunday. Robert Levett was buried in the church-yard of Bridewell, between one and two in the afternoon. He died on Thursday 17, about seven in the morning, by an instantaneous death. He was an old and faithful friend; I have known him from about 46. May God have mercy on him. May he have mercy on me.’

The death of Mr Thrale had made a very material alteration with respect to Johnson’s reception in that family. The manly authority of the husband no longer curbed the lively exuberance of the lady; and as her vanity had been fully gratified, by having the Colossus of Literature attached to her for many years, she gradually became less assiduous to please him. Whether her attachment to him was already divided by another object, I am unable to ascertain;¹ but it is plain that Johnson’s penetration was alive to her neglect or forced attention; for on the 6th of October this year, we find him making a ‘parting use of the library’ at Streatham, and pronouncing a prayer, which he composed on leaving Mr Thrale’s family.

‘Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when Thou givest, and

when Thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me.

'To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'

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1783. ÆTAT. 74.] – In 1783, he was more severely afflicted than ever, as will appear in the course of his correspondence; but still the same ardour for literature, the same constant piety, the same kindness for his friends, and the same vivacity both in conversation and writing, distinguished him.

On Friday, March 21, having arrived in London the night before, I was glad to find him at Mrs Thrale's house, in Argyll-street, appearances of friendship between them being still kept up. I was shewn into his room, and after the first salutation he said, 'I am glad you are come. I am very ill.' He looked pale, and was distressed with a difficulty of breathing; but after the common inquiries he assumed his usual strong animated style of conversation.

He talked with regret and indignation of the factious opposition to Government at this time, and imputed it, in a great measure, to the Revolution. 'Sir, (said he, in a low voice, having come nearer to me, while his old prejudices seemed to be fermenting in his mind,) this Hanoverian family is *isolée* here. They have no friends. Now the Stuarts had friends who stuck by them so late as 1745. When the right of the King is not revered, there will not be reverence for those appointed by the King.'

His observation that the present royal family has no friends, has been too much justified by the very ungrateful behaviour of many who were under great obligations to his Majesty; at the same time there are honourable exceptions; and the very next year after this conversation, and ever since, the King has had as extensive and generous support as ever was given to any monarch, and has had the satisfaction of knowing that he was more and more endeared to his people.

He repeated to me his verses on Mr Levett, with an emotion which gave them full effect; and then he was pleased to say, 'You must be as much with me as you can. You have done me good. You cannot think how much better I am since you came in.'

He sent a message to acquaint Mrs Thrale that I was arrived. I had not seen her since her husband's death. She soon appeared, and favoured me with an invitation to stay to dinner, which I accepted. There was no other company but herself and three of her daughters, Dr Johnson, and I. She too said, she was very glad I was come, for she was going to Bath, and should have been sorry to leave Dr Johnson before I came. This seemed to be attentive and kind; and I who had not been informed of any change, imagined all to be as well as formerly. He was little inclined to talk at dinner, and went to sleep after it; but when he joined us in the drawing-room, he seemed revived, and was again himself.

Talking of conversation, he said, 'There must, in the first place, be knowledge, there must be materials; in the second place, there must be a command of words; in the third place, there must be imagination, to place things in such views as they are not commonly seen in; and in the fourth place, there must be presence of mind, and a resolution that is not to be overcome by failures: this last is an essential requisite; for want of it many people do not excel in conversation. Now *I* want it: I throw up the game upon losing a trick.' I wondered to hear him talk thus of himself, and said, 'I don't know, Sir, how this may be; but I am sure you beat other people's cards out of their hands.' I doubt whether he heard this remark. While he went on talking triumphantly, I was fixed in admiration, and said to Mrs Thrale, 'O, for short-hand to take this down!' 'You'll carry it all in your head, (said she;) a long head is as good as short-hand.'

It has been observed and wondered at, that Mr Charles Fox never talked with any freedom in the presence of Dr Johnson, though it is well known, and I myself can witness, that his conversation is various, fluent, and exceedingly agreeable. Johnson's own experience, however, of that gentle-

man's reserve was a sufficient reason for his going on thus : 'Fox never talks in private company; not from any determination not to talk, but because he has not the first motion. A man who is used to the applause of the House of Commons, has no wish for that of a private company. A man accustomed to throw for a thousand pounds, if set down to throw for sixpence, would not be at the pains to count his dice. Burke's talk is the ebullition of his mind; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full.'

After musing for some time, he said, 'I wonder how I should have any enemies; for I do harm to nobody.' BOSWELL. 'In the first place, Sir, you will be pleased to recollect, that you set out with attacking the Scotch; so you got a whole nation for your enemies.' JOHNSON. 'Why, I own, that by my definition of *oats* I meant to vex them.' BOSWELL. 'Pray, Sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch?' JOHNSON. 'I cannot, Sir.' BOSWELL. 'Old Mr Sheridan says, it was because they sold Charles the First.' JOHNSON. 'Then, Sir, old Mr Sheridan has found out a very good reason.'

Next day, Saturday, March 22, I found him still at Mrs Thrale's, but he told me that he was to go to his own house in the afternoon. He was better, but I perceived he was but an unruly patient, for Sir Lucas Pepys, who visited him, while I was with him said, 'If you were *tractable*, Sir, I should prescribe for you.'

I had paid a visit to General Oglethorpe in the morning, and was told by him that Dr Johnson saw company on Saturday evenings, and he would meet me at Johnson's, that night. When I mentioned this to Johnson, not doubting that it would please him, as he had a great value for Oglethorpe, the fretfulness of his disease unexpectedly shewed itself; his anger suddenly kindled, and he said, with vehemence, 'Did not you tell him not to come? Am I to be *hunted* in this manner?' I satisfied him that I could not divine that the visit would not be convenient, and that I certainly could not take it upon me of my own accord to forbid the General.

I found Dr Johnson in the evening in Mrs Williams's room, at tea and coffee with her and Mrs Desmoulins, who were also both ill; it was a sad scene, and he was not in a very good humour. He said of a performance [James Elphinston's translation of Martial] that had lately come out, 'Sir, if you should search all the mad-houses in England, you would not find ten men who would write so, and think it sense.'

On Sunday, March 23, I breakfasted with Dr Johnson, who seemed much relieved, having taken opium the night before. He however protested against it, as a remedy that should be given with the utmost reluctance, and only in extreme necessity. I mentioned how commonly it was used in Turkey, and that therefore it could not be so pernicious as he apprehended. He grew warm and said, 'Turks take opium, and Christians take opium; but Russel, in his account of Aleppo, tells us, that it is as disgraceful in Turkey to take too much opium, as it is with us to get drunk. Sir, it is amazing how things are exaggerated. A gentleman was lately telling in a company where I was present, that in France, as soon as a man of fashion marries, he takes an opera girl into keeping; and this he mentioned as a general custom. "Pray, Sir, (said I,) how many opera girls may there be?" He answered, "About fourscore." "Well then, Sir, (said I,) you see there can be no more than fourscore men of fashion who can do this."'

Mrs Desmoulins made tea; and she and I talked before him upon a topick which he had once borne patiently from me when we were by ourselves, - his not complaining of the world, because he was not called to some great office, nor had attained to great wealth. He flew into a violent passion, I confess with some justice, and commanded us to have done. 'Nobody, (said he,) has a right to talk in this manner, to bring before a man his own character, and the events of his life, when he does not choose it should be done. I never have sought the world; the world was not to seek me. It is rather wonderful that so much has been done for me. All the complaints which are made of the world are unjust. I never knew a man of merit neglected : it was generally by his own

fault that he failed of success. A man may hide his head in a hole : he may go into the country, and publish a book now and then, which nobody reads, and then complain he is neglected. There is no reason why any person should exert himself for a man who has written a good book : he has not written it for any individual. I may as well make a present to the postman who brings me a letter.'

In the evening I came to him again. He was somewhat fretful from his illness. A gentleman [Boswell] asked him, whether he had been abroad to-day. 'Don't talk so childishly, (said he.) You may as well ask if I hanged myself to-day.' I mentioned politicks. JOHNSON. 'Sir, I'd as soon have a man to break my bones as talk to me of publick affairs, internal or external. I have lived to see things all as bad as they can be.'

I shall here insert a few of Johnson's sayings, without the formality of date, as they have no reference to any particular time or place.

'The more a man extends and varies his acquaintance the better,' This, however, was meant with a just restriction; for, he on another occasion said to me, 'Sir, a man may be so much of every thing, that he is nothing of any thing.'

'Raising the wages of day-labourers is wrong; for it does not make them live better, but only makes them idler, and idleness is a very bad thing for human nature.'

I praised the accuracy of an account-book of a lady whom I mentioned. JOHNSON. 'Keeping accounts, Sir, is of no use when a man is spending his own money, and has nobody to whom he is to account. You won't eat less beef to-day, because you have written down what it cost yesterday.' I mentioned another lady² who thought as he did, so that her husband could not get her to keep an account of the expence of the family, as she thought it enough that she never exceeded the sum allowed her. JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is fit she should keep an account, because her husband wishes it; but I do not see its use.'

As a small proof of his kindliness and delicacy of feeling, the following circumstances may be mentioned : One evening when we were in the street together, and I told him I

was going to sup at Mr Beauclerk's, he said, 'I'll go with you.' After having walked part of the way, seeming to recollect something, he suddenly stopped and said, 'I cannot go, — but *I do not love Beauclerk the less.*'

He said, 'How few of his friends' houses would a man choose to be at when he is sick.' He mentioned one or two. I recollect only Thrale's.

He observed, 'There is a wicked inclination in most people to suppose an old man decayed in his intellects. If a young or midde-aged man, when leaving a company, does not recollect where he laid his hat, it is nothing; but if the same inattention is discovered in an old man, people will shrug up their shoulders, and say, "His memory is going."'

Sir Joshua Reynolds communicated to me the following particulars: —

Johnson thought the poems published as translations from Ossian had so little merit, that he said, 'Sir, a man might write such stuff for ever, if he would *abandon* his mind to it.'

Dr Goldsmith said once to Dr Johnson, that he wished for some additional members to the LITERARY CLUB, to give it an agreeable variety; for (said he,) there can now be nothing new among us: we have travelled over one another's minds. Johnson seemed a little angry, and said, 'Sir, you have not travelled over *my* mind, I promise you.'

Johnson used to say that he made it a constant rule to talk as well as he could both as to sentiment and expression, by which means, what had been originally effort became familiar and easy. The consequence of this, Sir Joshua observed, was, that his common conversation in all companies was such as to secure him universal attention, as something above the usual colloquial style was expected.

Yet, though Johnson had this habit in company, when another mode was necessary, in order to investigate truth, he could descend to a language intelligible to the meanest capacity. An instance of this was witnessed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, when they were present at an examination of a little blackguard boy, by Mr Saunders Welch, the late West-

minster Justice. Welch, who imagined that he was exalting himself in Dr Johnson's eyes by using big words, spoke in a manner that was utterly unintelligible to the boy; Dr Johnson perceiving it, addressed himself to the boy, and changed the pompous phraseology into colloquial language. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was much amused by this procedure, which seemed a kind of reversing of what might have been expected from the two men, took notice of it to Dr Johnson, as they walked away by themselves. Johnson said, that it was continually the case; and that he was always obliged to *translate* the Justice's swelling diction, (smiling,) so as that his meaning might be understood by the vulgar, from whom information was to be obtained.

Sir Joshua once observed to him, that he had talked above the capacity of some people with whom they had been in company together. No matter, Sir, (said Johnson;) they consider it as a compliment to be talked to, as if they were wiser than they are.'

Johnson's dexterity in retort, when he seemed to be driven to an extremity by his adversary, was very remarkable. Of his power in this respect, our common friend, Mr [William] Windham, of Norfolk,³ has been pleased to furnish me with an eminent instance. However unfavourable to Scotland, he uniformly gave liberal praise to George Buchanan, as a writer. In a conversation concerning the literary merits of the two countries, in which Buchanan was introduced, a Scotchman, imagining that on this ground he should have an undoubted triumph over him, exclaimed, 'Ah, Dr Johnson, what would you have said of Buchanan, had he been an Englishman?' 'Why, Sir, (said Johnson, after a little pause,) I should *not* have said of Buchanan, had he been an *Englishman*, what I will now say of him as a *Scotchman*, — that he was the only man of genius his country ever produced.'

And this brings to my recollection another instance of the same nature. I once reminded him that when Dr Adam Smith was expatiating on the beauty of Glasgow, he had cut him short by saying, 'Pray, Sir, have you ever seen Brentford?' and I took the liberty to add, 'My dear Sir, surely that

was *shocking*.' 'Why, then, Sir, (he replied,) you have never seen Brentford.'

Though his usual phrase for conversation was *talk*, yet he made a distinction; for when he once told me that he dined the day before at a friend's house, with 'a very pretty company;' and I asked him if there was good conversation, he answered, 'No, Sir; we had *talk* enough, but no *conversation*; there was nothing *discussed*.'

Talking of the success of the Scotch in London, he imputed it in a considerable degree to their spirit of nationality. 'You know, Sir, (said he,) that no Scotchman publishes a book, or has a play brought upon the stage, but there are five hundred people ready to applaud him.'

Mr [John] Hoole told him, he was born in Moorfields, and had received part of his early instruction in Grub-street. 'Sir, (said Johnson, smiling,) you have been *regularly* educated.' Having asked who was his instructor, and Mr Hoole having answered, 'My uncle, Sir, who was a taylor;' Johnson, recollecting himself, said, 'Sir, I knew him; we called him the *metaphysical taylor*. He was of a club in Old-street, with me and George Psalmanazar, and some others: but pray, Sir, was he a good taylor?' Mr Hoole having answered that he believed he was too mathematical, and used to draw squares and triangles on his shop-board, so that he did not excel in the cut of a coat; - 'I am sorry for it (said Johnson,) for I would have every man to be master of his own business.'

He said to Sir William Scott, 'The age is running mad after innovation; all the business of the world is to be done in a new way; men are to be hanged in a new way; Tyburn itself is not safe from the fury of innovation.' It having been argued that this was an improvement, - 'No, Sir, (said he, eagerly,) it is *not* an improvement: they object that the old method drew together a number of spectators. Sir, executions are intended to draw spectators. If they do not draw spectators they don't answer their purpose. The old method was most satisfactory to all parties; the publick was gratified by a procession; the criminal was supported by it. Why is all this to be swept away?' I perfectly agree with Dr Johnson upon

this head, and am persuaded that executions now, the solemn procession being discontinued, have not nearly the effect which they formerly had.

Johnson's attention to precision and clearness in expression was very remarkable. He disapproved of parentheses; and I believe in all his voluminous writings, not half a dozen of them will be found. He never used the phrases *the former* and *the latter*, having observed, that they often occasioned obscurity; he therefore contrived to construct his sentences so as not to have occasion for them, and would even rather repeat the same words, in order to avoid them. Nothing is more common than to mistake surnames when we hear them carelessly uttered for the first time. To prevent this, he used not only to pronounce them slowly and distinctly, but to take the trouble of spelling them; a practice which I have often followed; and which I wish were general.

Such was the heat and irritability of his blood, that not only did he pare his nails to the quick; but scraped the joints of his fingers with a pen-knife, till they seemed quite red and raw.

The heterogeneous composition of human nature was remarkably exemplified in Johnson. His liberality in giving his money to persons in distress was extraordinary. Yet there lurked about him a propensity to paltry saving. One day I owned to him that 'I was occasionally troubled with a fit of narrowness.' 'Why, Sir, (said he,) so am I. *But I do not tell it.*' He has now and then borrowed a shilling of me; and when I asked for it again, seemed to be rather out of humour. A droll little circumstance once occurred: as if he meant to reprimand my minute exactness as a creditor, he thus addressed me; - 'Boswell, *lend me sixpence - not to be repaid.*'

This great man's attention to small things was very remarkable. As an instance of it, he one day said to me, 'Sir, when you get silver in change for a guinea, look carefully at it; you may find some curious piece of coin.'

Though a stern *true-born Englishman*, and fully prejudiced against all other nations, he had discernment enough

to see, and candour enough to censure, the cold reserve too common among Englishmen towards strangers: 'Sir, (said he,) two men of any other nation who are shewn into a room together, at a house where they are both visitors, will immediately find some conversation. But two Englishmen will probably go each to a different window, and remain in obstinate silence. Sir, we as yet do not enough understand the common rights of humanity.'

Maurice Morgann, Esq. authour of the very ingenious *Essay on the character of Falstaff*, had once an opportunity of entertaining Johnson for a day or two at Wickham, and by him I have been favoured with two anecdotes.

One is not a little to the credit of Johnson's candour. Mr Morgann and he had a dispute pretty late at night, in which Johnson would not give up, though he had the wrong side, and in short, both kept the field. Next morning, when they met in the breakfasting-room, Dr Johnson accosted Mr Morgann thus: - 'Sir, I have been thinking on our dispute last night - *You were in the right.*'

The other was as follows: - Johnson, for sport perhaps, or from the spirit of contradiction, eagerly maintained that Derrick had merit as a writer. Mr Morgann argued with him directly, in vain. At length he had recourse to this device. 'Pray, Sir, (said he,) whether do you reckon Derrick or Smart the best poet?' Johnson at once felt himself roused; and answered, 'Sir, there is no settling the point of precedency between a louse and a flea.'

Once, when checking my boasting too frequently of myself in company, he said to me, 'Boswell, you often vaunt so much as to provoke ridicule. You put me in mind of a man who was standing in the kitchen of an inn with his back to the fire, and thus accosted the person next to him, "Do you know, Sir, who I am?" "No, Sir, (said the other,) I have not that advantage." "Sir, (said he,) I am the *great* TWALMLEY, who invented the New Flood-gate Iron."'

His acute observation of human life made him remark, 'Sir, there is nothing by which a man exasperates most people more, than by displaying a superiour ability or brilliancy in

conversation. They seem pleased at the time; but their envy makes them curse him in their hearts.'

Johnson's love of little children, which he discovered upon all occasions, calling them 'pretty dears,' and giving them sweet-meats, was an undoubted proof of the real humanity and gentleness of his disposition.

His uncommon kindness to his servants, and serious concern, not only for their comfort in this world, but their happiness in the next, was another unquestionable evidence of what all, who were intimately acquainted with him, knew to be true.

Nor would it be just, under this head, to omit the fondness which he shewed for animals which he had taken under his protection. I never shall forget the indulgence with which he treated Hodge, his cat: for whom he himself used to go out and buy oysters, lest the servants having that trouble should take a dislike to the poor creature. I am, unluckily, one of those who have an antipathy to a cat, so that I am uneasy when in the room with one; and I own, I frequently suffered a good deal from the presence of this same Hodge. I recollect him one day scrambling up Dr Johnson's breast, apparently with much satisfaction, while my friend smiling and half-whistling, rubbed down his back, and pulled him by the tail; and when I observed he was a fine cat, saying, 'why yes, Sir, but I have had cats whom I liked better than this;' and then as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, 'but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed.'

This reminds me of the ludicrous account which he gave Mr Langton, of the despicable state of a young Gentleman of good family. 'Sir, when I heard of him last, he was running about town shooting cats.' And then in a sort of kindly reverie, he bethought himself of his own favourite cat, and said, 'But Hodge shan't be shot; no, no, Hodge shall not be shot.'

His respect for the Hierarchy, and particularly the Dignitaries of the Church, has been more than once exhibited in the course of his work. Mr [William] Seward saw him presented to the Archbishop of York, and described his *Bow to*

an ARCH-BISHOP, as such a studied elaboration of homage, such an extension of limb, such a flexion of body, as have seldom or ever been equalled.

I cannot help mentioning with much regret, that by my own negligence I lost an opportunity of having the history of my family from its founder Thomas Boswell, in 1504, recorded and illustrated by Johnson's pen. Such was his goodness to me, that when I presumed to solicit him for so great a favour, he was pleased to say, 'Let me have all the materials you can collect, and I will do it both in Latin and English; then let it be printed and copies of it be deposited in various places for security and preservation.'

On April 18, (being Good-Friday,) I found him at breakfast, in his usual manner upon that day, drinking tea without milk, and eating a cross-bun to prevent faintness; we went to St Clement's church, as formerly. When we came home from church, he placed himself on one of the stone-seats at his garden-door, and I took the other, and thus in the open air and in a placid frame of mind, he talked away very easily. JOHNSON. 'Were I a country gentleman, I should not be very hospitable, I should not have crowds in my house.' BOSWELL. 'Sir Alexander Dick tells me, that he remembers having a thousand people in a year to dine at his house: that is, reckoning each person as one, each time that he dined there.' JOHNSON. 'That, Sir, is about three a day.' BOSWELL. 'How your statement lessens the idea.' JOHNSON. 'That, Sir, is the good of counting. It brings every thing to a certainty, which before floated in the mind indefinitely.' BOSWELL. 'But *Omne ignotum pro magnifico est*: [the unknown always passes for something grand] one is sorry to have this diminished.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you should not allow yourself to be delighted with error.' BOSWELL. 'Three a day seem but few.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, he who entertains three a day, does very liberally. And if there is a large family, the poor entertain those three, for they eat what the poor would get: there must be superfluous meat; it must be given to the poor, or thrown out.' BOSWELL. 'I observe in London, that the poor go about and gather bones, which I under-

stand are manufactured.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; they boil them, and extract a grease from them for greasing wheels and other purposes. Of the best pieces they make a mock ivory, which is used for hafts to knives, and various other things; the coarser pieces they burn and pound, and sell the ashes.' BOSWELL. 'For what purpose, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, for making a furnace for the chymists for melting iron. A paste made of burnt bones will stand a stronger heat than any thing else. Consider, Sir; if you are to melt iron, you cannot line your pot with brass, because it is softer than iron, and would melt sooner; nor with iron, for though malleable iron is harder than cast iron, yet it would not do; but a paste of burnt-bones will not melt.' BOSWELL. 'Do you know, Sir, I have discovered a manufacture to a great extent, of what you only piddle at, — scraping and drying the peel of oranges. At a place in Newgate-street, there is a prodigious quantity prepared, which they sell to the distillers.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I believe they make a higher thing out of them than a spirit; they make what is called orange-butter, the oil of the orange inspissated, which they mix with common pomatum, and make it fragrant. The oil does not fly off in the drying.'

BOSWELL. 'I wish to have a good walled garden.' JOHNSON. 'I don't think it would be worth the expence to you. We compute in England, a park wall at a thousand pounds a mile; now a garden-wall must cost at least as much. You intend your trees should grow higher than a deer will leap. Now let us see; for a hundred pounds you could only have forty-four square yards, [yards square] which is very little; for two hundred pounds, you may have eighty-four square yards, [yards square] which is very well. But when will you get the value of two hundred pounds of walls, in fruit, in your climate? No, Sir, such contention with Nature is not worth while. I would plant an orchard, and have plenty of such fruit as ripen well in your country. My friend, Dr [Samuel] Madden, of Ireland, said, that "in an orchard there should be enough to eat, enough to lay up, enough to be stolen, and enough to rot upon the ground." Cherries are an early fruit, you may have them; and you may have the

early apples and pears.' BOSWELL. 'We cannot have nonpareils.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you can no more have nonpareils than you can have grapes.' BOSWELL. 'We have them, Sir; but they are very bad.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, never try to have a thing merely to shew that you *cannot* have it. From ground that would let for forty shillings you may have a large orchard; and you see it costs you only forty shillings. Nay, you may graze the ground when the trees are grown up; you cannot while they are young.' BOSWELL. 'Is not a good garden a very common thing in England, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'Not so common, Sir, as you imagine. In Lincolnshire there is hardly an orchard; in Staffordshire very little fruit.' BOSWELL. 'Has Langton no orchard?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir.' BOSWELL. 'How so, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, from the general negligence of the county. He has it not, because nobody else has it.' BOSWELL. 'A hot-house is a certain thing; I may have that.' JOHNSON. 'A hot-house is pretty certain; but you must first build it, then you must keep fires in it, and you must have a gardener to take care of it.' BOSWELL. 'But if I have a gardener at any rate? -' JOHNSON. 'Why, yes.' BOSWELL. 'I'd have it near my house; there is no need to have it in the orchard.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, I'd have it near my house. I would plant a great many currants; the fruit is good, and they make a pretty sweetmeat.'

I record this minute detail, which some may think trifling, in order to show clearly how this great man, whose mind could grasp such large and extensive subjects, was yet well-informed in the common affairs of life and loved to illustrate them.

On Sunday, April 20, being Easter-day, after attending solemn service at St Paul's, I came to Dr Johnson, and found Mr Lowe, the painter, sitting with him. Mr Lowe mentioned the great number of new buildings of late in London, yet that Dr Johnson had observed, that the number of inhabitants was not increased. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, the bills of mortality prove that no more people die now than formerly; so it is plain no more live. The register of births proves nothing, for not one tenth of the people of London are born there.'

BOSWELL. 'I believe, Sir, a great many of the children born in London die early.' JOHNSON. 'Why, yes, Sir.' BOSWELL. 'But those who do live, are as stout and strong people as any : Dr Price says, they must be naturally stronger to get through.' JOHNSON. 'That is system, Sir. A great traveller observes, that it is said there are no weak or deformed people among the Indians; but he with much sagacity assigns the reason of this, which is, that the hardship of their life as hunters and fishers does not allow weak or diseased children to grow up. Now had I been an Indian, I must have died early; my eyes would not have served me to get food. I indeed now could fish, give me English tackle; but had I been an Indian I must have starved, or they would have knocked me on the head, when they saw I could do nothing.' BOSWELL. 'Perhaps they would have taken care of you : we are told they are fond of oratory, you would have talked to them.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, I should not have lived long enough to be fit to talk; I should have been dead before I was ten years old. Depend upon it, Sir, a savage, when he is hungry, will not carry about with him a booby of nine years old, who cannot help himself. They have no affection, Sir.' BOSWELL. 'I believe natural affection, of which we hear so much, is very small.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, natural affection is nothing : but affection from principle and established duty is sometimes wonderfully strong.' LOWE. 'A hen, Sir, will feed her chickens in preference to herself.' JOHNSON. 'But we don't know that the hen is hungry; let the hen be fairly hungry, and I'll warrant she'll peck the corn herself. A cock, I believe, will feed hens instead of himself; but we don't know that the cock is hungry.' BOSWELL. 'And that, Sir, is not from affection but gallantry. But some of the Indians have affection.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, that they help some of their children is plain; for some of them live, which they could not do without being helped.'

I dined with him; the company were, Mrs Williams, Mrs Desmoulins, and Mr Lowe. He seemed not to be well, talked little, grew drowsy soon after dinner, and retired, upon which I went away.

Having next day gone to Mr Burke's seat in the country, from whence I was recalled by an express, that a near relation of mine [Lieutenant David Cunninghame] had killed his antagonist in a duel, and was himself dangerously wounded, I saw little of Dr Johnson till Monday, April 28, when I spent a considerable part of the day with him, and introduced the subject, which then chiefly occupied my mind. JOHNSON. 'I do not see, Sir, that fighting is absolutely forbidden in Scripture; I see revenge forbidden, but not self-defence.' BOSWELL. 'The Quakers say it is; "Unto him that smiteth thee on one cheek, offer also the other."' JOHNSON. 'But stay, Sir; the text is meant only to have the effect of moderating passion; it is plain that we are not to take it in a literal sense. We see this from the context, where there are other recommendations, which I warrant you the Quaker will not take literally; as, for instance, "From him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away." Let a man whose credit is bad, come to a Quaker, and say, "Well, Sir, lend me a hundred pounds;" he'll find him as unwilling as any other man. No, Sir, a man may shoot the man who invades his character, as he may shoot him who attempts to break into his house. So in 1745, my friend, Tom Cumming, the Quaker, said, he would not fight, but he would drive an ammunition cart; and we know that the Quakers have sent flannel waistcoats to our soldiers, to enable them to fight better.' BOSWELL. 'When a man is the aggressor, and by ill-usage forces on a duel in which he is killed, have we not little ground to hope that he is gone into a state of happiness?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, we are not to judge determinately of the state in which a man leaves this life. He may in a moment have repented effectually, and it is possible may have been accepted by God. There is in *Camden's Remains*, an epitaph upon a very wicked man, who was killed by a fall from his horse, in which he is supposed to say,

"Between the stirrup and the ground,
I mercy ask'd, I mercy found."

BOSWELL. 'Is not the expression in the Burial-service,

"in the *sure* and *certain* hope of a blessed resurrection," too strong to be used indiscriminately, and, indeed, sometimes when those over whose bodies it is said, have been notoriously profane?" JOHNSON. 'It is *sure* and *certain hope*, Sir; not *belief*.' I did not insist further; but cannot help thinking that less positive words would be more proper.

Talking of a man who was grown very fat, so as to be incommoded with corpulency; he said, 'He eats too much, Sir.' BOSWELL. 'I don't know, Sir, you will see one man fat who eats moderately, and another lean who eats a great deal.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, Sir, whatever may be the quantity that a man eats, it is plain that if he is too fat, he has eaten more than he should have done. One man may have a digestion that consumes food better than common; but it is certain that solidity is encreased by putting something to it.' BOSWELL. 'But may not solids swell and be distended?' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, they may swell and be distended; but that is not fat.'

We talked of the accusation against a gentleman [Sir Thomas Rumbold] for supposed delinquencies in India. JOHNSON. 'What foundation there is for accusation I know not, but they will not get at him. Where bad actions are committed at so great a distance, a delinquent can obscure the evidence till the scent becomes cold; there is a cloud between, which cannot be penetrated: therefore all distant power is bad. I am clear that the best plan for the government of India is a despotick governour; for if he be a good man, it is evidently the best government; and supposing him to be a bad man, it is better to have one plunderer than many. A governour whose power is checked, lets others plunder, that he himself may be allowed to plunder; but if despotick, he sees that the more he lets others plunder, the less there will be for himself, so he restrains them; and though he himself plunders, the country is a gainer, compared with being plundered by numbers.'

I mentioned the very liberal payment which had been received for reviewing; and, as evidence of this, that it had

been proved in a trial, that Dr [John] Shebbeare had received six guineas a sheet for that kind of literary labour. JOHNSON. 'Sir, he might get six guineas for a particular sheet, but not *communibus sheetibus*.' [for average sheets] BOSWELL. 'Pray, Sir, by a sheet of review is it meant that it shall be all of the writer's own composition, or are extracts, made from the book reviewed, deducted?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir: it is a sheet, no matter of what.' BOSWELL. 'I think that it is not reasonable.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, it is. A man will more easily write a sheet all his own, than read an octavo volume to get extracts.' To one of Johnson's wonderful fertility of mind I believe writing was really easier than reading and extracting; but with ordinary men the case is very different.

On [Wednesday, April 30] I found him at home in the forenoon, and Mr Seward with him.

SEWARD. 'I wonder that there should be people without religion.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, you need not wonder at this, when you consider how large a proportion of almost every man's life is passed without thinking of it. I myself was for some years totally regardless of religion. It had dropped out of my mind. It was at an early part of my life. Sickness brought it back, and I hope I have never lost it since.' BOSWELL. 'My dear Sir, what a man you must have been without religion! Why you must have gone on drinking, and swearing, and —' JOHNSON. (with a smile,) 'I drank enough and swore enough, to be sure.' SEWARD. 'One should think that sickness, and the view of death, would make more men religious.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, they do not know how to go about it: they have not the first notion. A man who has never had religion before, no more grows religious when he is sick, than a man who has never learnt figures can count when he has need of calculation.'

On Thursday, May 1, I visited him in the evening along with young Mr Burke [Edmund Burke's son, Richard]. He said, 'It is strange that there should be so little reading in the world, and so much writing. People in general do not will-

ingly read, if they can have any thing else to amuse them. There must be an external impulse; emulation, or vanity, or avarice. The progress which the understanding makes through a book, has more pain than pleasure in it. Language is scanty, and inadequate to express the nice gradations and mixtures of our feelings. No man reads a book of science from pure inclination. The books that we do read with pleasure are light compositions, which contain a quick succession of events. However, I have this year read all Virgil through. I read a book of the *Æneid* every night, so it was done in twelve nights, and I had great delight in it. The *Georgicks* did not give me so much pleasure, except the fourth book. The *Eclogues* I have almost all by heart. I do not think the story of the *Æneid* interesting. I like the story of the *Odyssey* much better; and this is not on account of the wonderful things which it contains. The story of the *Odyssey* is interesting, as a great part of it is domestick. It has been said, there is pleasure in writing, particularly in writing verses. I allow you may have pleasure from writing, after it is over, if you have written well; but you don't go willingly to it again. I know when I have been writing verses, I have run my finger down the margin, to see how many I had made, and how few I had to make.'

He seemed to be in a very placid humour, and although I have no note of the particulars of young Mr Burke's conversation, it is but justice to mention in general, that it was such that Dr Johnson said to me afterwards, 'He did very well indeed; I have a mind to tell his father.'

I have no minute of any interview with Johnson till Thursday, May 15, when I find what follows: — BOSWELL. 'I wish much to be in Parliament, Sir.' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, unless you come resolved to support any administration, you would be the worse for being in Parliament, because you would be obliged to live more expensively.' BOSWELL. 'Perhaps, Sir, I should be the less happy for being in Parliament. I never would sell my vote, and I should be vexed if things went wrong.' JOHNSON. 'That's cant, Sir. It would

not vex you more in the house, than in the gallery : publick affairs vex no man.' BOSWELL. 'Have not they vexed yourself a little, Sir? Have you not been vexed by all the turbulence of this reign, and by that absurd vote of the House of Commons, "That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished?"' JOHNSON. 'Sir, I have never slept an hour less, nor eat an ounce less meat. I would have knocked the factious dogs on the head, to be sure; but I was not *vexed*.' BOSWELL. 'I declare, Sir, upon my honour, I did imagine I was vexed, and took a pride in it; but it *was*, perhaps, cant; for I own I neither ate less, nor slept less.' JOHNSON. 'My dear friend, clear your *mind* of cant. You may *talk* as other people do : you may say to a man, "Sir, I am your most humble servant." You are *not* his most humble servant. You may say, "These are sad times; it is a melancholy thing to be reserved to such times." You don't mind the times. You tell a man, "I am sorry you had such bad weather the last day of your journey, and were so much wet." You don't care six-pence whether he was wet or dry. You may *talk* in this manner; it is a mode of talking in Society : but don't *think* foolishly.'

Another day I spoke of one of our friends, [Edmund Burke] of whom he, as well as I, had a very high opinion. He expatiated in his praise; but added, 'Sir, he is a cursed Whig, a *bottomless* Whig, as they all are now.'

On [Thursday] May 29, being to set out for Scotland next morning, I passed a part of the day with him in more than usual earnestness; as his health was in a more precarious state than at any time when I had parted from him. He, however, was quick and lively, and critical as usual. I mentioned one who was a very learned man. [Bennet Langton] JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir, he has a great deal of learning; but it never lies straight. There is never one idea by the side of another; 'tis all entangled : and then he drives it so aukwardly upon conversation.'

I stated to him an anxious thought, by which a sincere Christian might be disturbed, even when conscious of having

lived a good life, so far as is consistent with human infirmity; he might fear that he should afterwards fall away, and be guilty of such crimes as would render all his former religion vain. Could there be, upon this awful subject, such a thing as balancing of accounts? Suppose a man who has led a good life for seven years, commits an act of wickedness, and instantly dies; will his former good life have any effect in his favour? JOHNSON. 'Sir, if a man has led a good life for seven years, and then is hurried by passion to do what is wrong, and is suddenly carried off, depend upon it he will have the reward of his seven years' good life; God will not take a catch of him.'

I assured him, that in the extensive and various range of his acquaintance there never had been any one who had a more sincere respect and affection for him than I had. He said, 'I believe it, Sir. Were I in distress, there is no man to whom I should sooner come than to you. I should like to come and have a cottage in your park, toddle about, live mostly on milk, and be taken care of by Mrs Boswell.'

He embraced me, and gave me his blessing, as usual when I was leaving him for any length of time. I walked from his door to-day, with a fearful apprehension of what might happen before I returned.

My anxious apprehensions at parting with him this year proved to be but too well founded; for not long afterwards he had a dreadful stroke of the palsy. Two days after he wrote thus to Mrs Thrale: —

'On Monday, the 16th, I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up, as has been long my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God, that however he might afflict my body, he would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good: I made

them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

'Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a paralytick stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state, that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death itself, when it should come, would excite less horreur than seems now to attend it.

'In order to rouse the vocal organs, I took two drams. Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence. I put myself into violent motion, and I think repeated it; but all was vain. I then went to bed, and, strange as it may seem, I think, slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive what I should do. Though God stopped my speech, he left me my hand; I enjoyed a mercy which was not granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me as I am writing, and rejoices that I have what he wanted. My first note was necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands.

'I then wrote a card to Mr [Edmund] Allen, that I might have a discreet friend at hand, to act as occasion should require.³ In penning this note, I had some difficulty; my hand, I knew not how nor why, made wrong letters. I then wrote to Dr Taylor to come to me, and bring Dr [William] Heberden; and I sent to Dr [Richard] Brocklesby, who is my neighbour. My physicians are very friendly, and give me great hopes; but you may imagine my situation. I have so far recovered my vocal powers, as to repeat the Lord's Prayer with no very imperfect articulation. My memory, I hope, yet remains as it was; but such an attack produces solicitude for the safety of every faculty.'

Such was the general vigour of his constitution, that he recovered from this alarming and severe attack with wonderful quickness; so that in July he was able to make a visit to Mr Langton at Rochester, where he passed about a fortnight, and made little excursions as easily as at any time of his life. In August he went as far as the neighbourhood of

Salisbury, to Heale, the seat of William Bowles, Esq, a gentleman whom I have heard him praise for exemplary religious order in his family.

While he was here he had a letter from Dr Brocklesby, acquainting him of the death of Mrs Williams, which affected him a good deal. Though for several years her temper had not been complacent, she had valuable qualities, and her departure left a blank in his house. Upon this occasion he, according to his habitual course of piety, composed a prayer.

I shall here insert a few particulars concerning him, with which I have been favoured by one of his friends [William Bowles, son of Johnson's host at Heale].

'His thoughts in the latter part of his life were frequently employed on his deceased friends. He often muttered these, or such like sentences : "Poor man ! and then he died."'

'Speaking of a certain literary friend, [perhaps Joseph Warton] "He is a very pompous puzzling fellow, (said he); he lent me a letter once that somebody had written to him, no matter what it was about; but he wanted to have the letter back, and expressed a mighty value for it; he hoped it was to be met with again, he would not lose it for a thousand pounds. I layed my hand upon it soon afterwards, and gave it him. I believe I said, I was very glad to have met with it. O, then he did not know that it signified any thing. So you see, when the letter was lost it was worth a thousand pounds, and when it was found it was not worth a farthing."'

'Dr Johnson's method of conversation was certainly calculated to excite attention, and to amuse or instruct, (as it happened,) without wearying or confusing his company. He was always most perfectly clear and perspicuous; and his language was so accurate, and his sentences so neatly constructed, that his conversation might have been all printed without any correction. At the same time, it was easy and natural; the accuracy of it had no appearance of labour, constraint, or stiffness; he seemed more correct than others, by the force of habit, and the customary exercises of his powerful mind.'

'A friend was one day, about two years before his death,

struck with some instance of Dr Johnson's great candour. "Well, Sir, (said he,) I will always say that you are a very candid man." "Will you, (replied the Doctor,) I doubt then you will be very singular. But, indeed, Sir, (continued he,) I look upon myself to be a man very much misunderstood. I am not an uncandid, nor am I a severe man. I sometimes say more than I mean, in jest; and people are apt to believe me serious: however, I am more candid than I was when I was younger. As I know more of mankind I expect less of them, and am ready now to call a man a *good man*, upon easier terms than I was formerly." "

His fortitude and patience met with severe trials during this year. The stroke of the palsy has been related circumstantially; but he was also afflicted with the gout, and was besides troubled with a complaint which not only was attended with immediate inconvenience, but threatened him with a painful chirurgical operation, from which most men would shrink. The complaint was a *sarcocoele*, which Johnson bore with uncommon firmness, and was not at all frightened while he looked forward to amputation. He was attended by Mr [Dr Percivall] Pott and Mr [William] Cruikshank. I have before me a letter of the 30th of July this year, to Mr Cruikshank, in which he says, 'I am going to put myself into your hands;' and another, accompanying a set of his *Lives of the Poets*, in which he says, 'I beg your acceptance of these volumes, as an acknowledgement of the great favours which you have bestowed on, Sir, your most obliged and most humble servant.'

Happily the complaint abated without his being put to the torture of amputation.

He this autumn received a visit from the celebrated Mrs Siddons. He gives this account of it in one of his letters to Mrs Thrale: -

'Mrs Siddons, in her visit to me, behaved with great modesty and propriety, and left nothing behind her to be censured or despised. Neither praise nor money, the two powerful corrupters of mankind, seem to have depraved her. I shall be glad to see her again.'

Mr [John Philip] Kemble [Mrs Siddons's brother] has favoured me with the following minute of what passed at this visit : —

When Mrs Siddons came into the room, there happened to be no chair ready for her, which he observing, said with a smile, "Madam, you who so often occasion a want of seats to other people, will the more easily excuse the want of one yourself."

Having placed himself by her, he with great good humour entered upon a consideration of the English drama; and, among other inquiries, particularly asked her which of Shakspeare's characters she was most pleased with. Upon her answering that she thought the character of Queen Catharine, in *Henry the Eighth*, the most natural : — "I think so too, Madam, (said he;) and whenever you perform it, I will once more hobble out to the theatre myself." "

Johnson, indeed, had thought more upon the subject of acting than might be generally supposed. Talking of it one day to Mr Kemble, he said, 'Are you, Sir, one of those enthusiasts who believe yourself transformed into the very character you represent?' Upon Mr Kemble's answering that he had never felt so strong a persuasion himself; 'To be sure not, Sir, (said Johnson;) the thing is impossible. And if Garrick really believed himself to be that monster, Richard the Third, he deserved to be hanged every time he performed it.'

In the end of this year he was seized with a spasmodick asthma of such violence, that he was confined to the house in great pain, being sometimes obliged to sit all night in his chair, a recumbent posture being so hurtful to his respiration, that he could not endure lying in bed; and there came upon him at the same time that oppressive and fatal disease, a dropsy. It was a very severe winter, which probably aggravated his complaints; and the solitude in which Mr Levett and Mrs Williams had left him, rendered his life very gloomy. Mrs Desmoulins, who still lived, was herself so very ill, that she could contribute very little to his relief. He, however, had none of that unsocial shyness which we commonly

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see in people afflicted with sickness. He did not hide his head from the world, in solitary abstraction ; he did not deny himself to the visits of his friends and acquaintances ; but at all times, when he was not overcome by sleep, was ready for conversation as in his best days.

PART X

1784

1784. ÆTAT. 75.] – And now I am arrived at the last year of the life of SAMUEL JOHNSON, a year in which, although passed in severe indisposition, he nevertheless gave many evidences of the continuance of those wondrous powers of mind, which raised him so high in the intellectual world. His conversation and his letters of this year were in no respect inferior to those of former years.

‘To JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

DEAR SIR, – I hear of many enquiries which your kindness has disposed you to make after me. I have long intended you a long letter, which perhaps the imagination of its length hindered me from beginning. I will, therefore, content myself with a shorter.

‘Having promoted the institution of a new Club in the neighbourhood, at the house of an old servant of Thrale’s,¹ I went thither to meet the company, and was seized with a spasmodick asthma so violent, that with difficulty I got to my own house, in which I have been confined eight or nine weeks, and from which I know not when I shall be able to go even to church. The asthma, however, is not the worst. A dropsy gains ground upon me; my legs and thighs are very much swollen with water, which I should be content if I could keep there, but I am afraid that it will soon be higher. My nights are very sleepless and very tedious. And yet I am extremely afraid of dying.

‘My physicians try to make me hope, that much of my malady is the effect of cold, and that some degree at least of recovery is to be expected from vernal breezes and summer suns. If my life is prolonged to autumn, I should be glad to try a warmer climate; though how to travel with a diseased

body, without a companion to conduct me, and with very little money, I do not well see. [Allan] Ramsay has recovered his limbs in Italy; and Fielding was sent to Lisbon, where, indeed, he died; but he was, I believe, past hope when he went. Think for me what I can do.

'Let me have your prayers. My compliments to your lady, and young ones. Ask your physicians about my case: and desire Sir Alexander Dick to write me his opinion. I am, dear Sir, &c.

'Feb. 11, 1784.'

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

'TO THE REVEREND DR TAYLOR, *Ashbourne, Derbyshire*

'DEAR SIR, — What can be the reason that I hear nothing from you? I hope nothing disables you from writing. What I have seen, and what I have felt, gives me reason to fear every thing. Do not omit giving me the comfort of knowing, that after all my losses I have yet a friend left.

'I want every comfort. My life is very solitary and very cheerless. Though it has pleased GOD wonderfully to deliver me from the dropsy, I am yet very weak, and have not passed the door since the 13th of December. I hope for some help from warm weather, which will surely come in time.

'I could not have the consent of the physicians to go to church yesterday; I therefore received the holy sacrament at home, in the room where I communicated with dear Mrs Williams, a little before her death. O! my friend, the approach of death is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid. It is vain to look round and round for that help which cannot be had. Yet we hope and hope, and fancy that he who has lived to-day may live to-morrow. But let us learn to derive our hope only from GOD.

'In the mean time, let us be kind to one another. I have no friend now living but you and Mr Hector, that was the friend of my youth. Do not neglect, dear Sir, yours affectionately,

'London, Easter-Monday,

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

'April 12, 1784.'

What follows is a beautiful specimen of his gentleness and

complacency to a young lady his god-child, one of the daughters of his friend Mr Langton, then I think in her seventh year. He took the trouble to write it in a large round hand, nearly resembling printed characters, that she might have the satisfaction of reading it herself. The original lies before me, but shall be faithfully restored to her; and I dare say will be preserved by her as a jewel as long as she lives.

'To MISS JANE LANGTON, in Rochester, Kent

MY DEAREST MISS JENNY, — I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long without being answered; but, when I am not pretty well, I do not always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected; and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetick, and, above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers, and read your Bible. I am, my dear, your most humble servant,

'May 10, 1784.'

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

On Wednesday, May 5, I arrived in London, and next morning had the pleasure to find Dr Johnson greatly recovered. I but just saw him; for a coach was waiting to carry him to Islington, to the house of his friend the Reverend Mr [George] Strahan,² where he went sometimes for the benefit of good air, which, notwithstanding his having formerly laughed at the general opinion upon the subject, he now acknowledged was conducive to health.

On Saturday, May 15, I dined with him at Dr Brocklesby's. Of [this day] and others on which I saw him, I have no memorials, except the general recollection of his being able and animated in conversation, and appearing to relish society as much as the youngest man. I find only these three small particulars: — One, when a person was mentioned, who said, 'I have lived fifty-one years in this world without having had

ten minutes of uneasiness;' he exclaimed, 'The man who says so, lies : he attempts to impose on human credulity.'

On the evening of Saturday, May 15, he was in fine spirits, at our Essex-Head Club. He told us, 'I dined yesterday at Mrs Garrick's, with Mrs Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney. Three such women are not to be found : I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs [Charlotte] Lennox,³ who is superiour to them all.' BOSWELL. 'What ! had you them all to yourself, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'I had them all as much as they were had; but it might have been better had there been more company there.' BOSWELL. 'Might not Mrs Montagu have been a fourth?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, Mrs Montagu does not make a trade of her wit; but Mrs Montagu is a very extraordinary woman; she has a constant stream of conversation, and it is always impregnated; it has always meaning.' BOSWELL. 'Mr Burke has a constant stream of conversation.' JOHNSON. 'Yes, Sir; if a man were to go by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed, to shun a shower, he would say – "this is an extraordinary man." If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse drest, the ostler would say – "we have had an extraordinary man here." ' BOSWELL. 'Foote was a man who never failed in conversation. If he had gone into a stable –' JOHNSON. 'Sir, if he had gone into a stable, the ostler would have said, "here has been a comical fellow"; but he would not have respected him.'

He called to us with a sudden air of exultation, as the thought started into his mind, 'O ! Gentlemen, I must tell you a very great thing. The Empress of Russia has ordered the *Rambler* to be translated into the Russian language :⁴ so I shall be read on the banks of the Wolga. Horace boasts that his fame would extend as far as the banks of the Rhone; now the Wolga is farther from me than the Rhone was from Horace.' BOSWELL. 'You must certainly be pleased with this, Sir.' JOHNSON. 'I am pleased, Sir, to be sure. A man is pleased to find he has succeeded in that which he has endeavoured to do.'

On Wednesday, May 19, I sat a part of the evening with

him, by ourselves. 'When I was ill, (said he) I desired [Langton] would tell me sincerely in what he thought my life was faulty. Sir, he brought me a sheet of paper, on which he had written down several texts of Scripture, recommending christian charity. And when I questioned him what occasion I had given for such an animadversion, all that he could say amounted to this, – that I sometimes contradicted people in conversation. Now what harm does it do to any man to be contradicted?' BOSWELL. 'I suppose he meant the *manner* of doing it; roughly, – and harshly.' JOHNSON. 'And who is the worse for that?' BOSWELL. 'It hurts people of weak nerves.' JOHNSON. 'I know no such weak-nerved people.' Mr Burke, to whom I related this conference, said, 'It is well, if when a man comes to die, he has nothing heavier upon his conscience than having been a little rough in conversation.'

He had now a great desire to go to Oxford, as his first jaunt after his illness.

On Thursday, June 3, the Oxford post-coach took us up in the morning at Bolt-court. The other two passengers were Mrs Beresford and her daughter, two very agreeable ladies from America; they were going to Worcestershire, where they then resided. Frank had been sent by his master the day before to take places for us; and I found, from the way-bill, that Dr Johnson had made our names be put down. Mrs Beresford, who had read it, whispered me, 'Is this the great Dr Johnson?' I told her it was; so she was then prepared to listen. As she soon happened to mention in a voice so low that Johnson did not hear it, that her husband had been a member of the American Congress, I cautioned her to beware of introducing that subject, as she must know how very violent Johnson was against the people of that country. He talked a great deal, but I am sorry I have preserved little of the conversation. Miss Beresford was so much charmed, that she said to me aside, 'How he does talk! Every sentence is an essay.' She amused herself in the coach with knotting; he would scarcely allow this species of employment any merit, 'Next to mere idleness (said he,) I think knotting is to be reckoned in the scale of insignificance; though I once at-

tempted to learn knotting. Dempster's sister (looking to me,) endeavoured to teach me it; but I made no progress.'

I was surprised at his talking without reserve in the public post-coach of the state of his affairs; 'I have (said he,) about the world I think above a thousand pounds, which I intend shall afford Frank an annuity of seventy pounds a year.' Indeed his openness with people at a first interview was remarkable.

At the inn where we stopped he was exceedingly dissatisfied with some roast mutton which we had for dinner. The ladies I saw wondered to see the great philosopher, whose wisdom and wit they had been admiring all the way, get into ill-humour from such a cause. He scolded the waiter, saying, 'It is as bad as bad can be: it is ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-drest.'

He bore the journey very well, and seemed to feel himself elevated as he approached Oxford, that magnificent and venerable seat of Learning, Orthodoxy, and Toryism. Frank came in the heavy coach, in readiness to attend him; and we were received with the most polite hospitality at the house of his old friend Dr Adams, Master of Pembroke College, who had given us a kind invitation.

On Friday, June 11, we talked at breakfast, of forms of prayer. JOHNSON. 'I know of no good prayers but those in the *Book of Common Prayer*.' DR ADAMS. (in a very earnest manner) 'I wish, Sir, you would compose some family prayers.' JOHNSON. 'I will not compose prayers for you, Sir, because you can do it for yourself. But I have thought of getting together all the books of prayers which I could, selecting those which should appear to me the best, putting out some, inserting others, adding some prayers of my own, and prefixing a discourse on prayer.' We all now gathered about him, and two or three of us at a time joined in pressing him to execute this plan. He seemed to be a little displeased at the manner of our importunity, and in great agitation called out, 'Do not talk thus of what is so awful. I know not what time GOD will allow me in this world. There are many things which I wish to do.' Some of us persisted, and Dr

Adams said, 'I never was more serious about any thing in my life.' JOHNSON. 'Let me alone, let me alone; I am overpowered.' And then he put his hands before his face, and reclined for some time upon the table.

Mr Henderson, with whom I had sauntered in the venerable walks of Merton-College, and found him a very learned and pious man, supt with us. Dr Johnson surprised him not a little, by acknowledging with a look of horror, that he was much oppressed by the fear of death. The amiable Dr Adams suggested that God was infinitely good. JOHNSON. 'That he is infinitely good, as far as the perfection of his nature will allow, I certainly believe; but it is necessary for good upon the whole, that individuals should be punished. As to an *individual*, therefore, he is not infinitely good; and as I cannot be *sure* that I have fulfilled the conditions on which salvation is granted, I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned.' (looking dismally.) DR ADAMS. 'What do you mean by damned?' JOHNSON. (passionately and loudly) 'Sent to Hell, Sir, and punished everlastingly.' DR ADAMS. 'I don't believe that doctrine.' JOHNSON. 'Hold, Sir; do you believe that some will be punished at all?' DR ADAMS. 'Being excluded from Heaven will be a punishment; yet there may be no great positive suffering.' JOHNSON. 'Well, Sir; but, if you admit any degree of punishment, there is an end of your argument for infinite goodness simply considered; for, infinite goodness would inflict no punishment whatever. There is not infinite goodness physically considered; morally there is.' BOSWELL. 'But may not a man attain to such a degree of hope as not to be uneasy from the fear of death?' JOHNSON. 'A man may have such a degree of hope as to keep him quiet. You see I am not quiet, from the vehemence with which I talk; but I do not despair.' MRS ADAMS. 'You seem, Sir, to forget the merits of our Redeemer.' JOHNSON. 'Madam, I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said that he will set some on his right hand and some on his left.' He was in gloomy agitation, and said, 'I'll have no more on't.'

On Sunday, June 13, our philosopher was calm at break-

fast. There was something exceedingly pleasing in our leading a College life, without restraint, and with superiour elegance, in consequence of our living in the Master's house, and having the company of ladies. Mrs [Ann] Kennicot^s related, in his presence, a lively saying of Dr Johnson to Miss Hannah More, who had expressed a wonder that the poet who had written *Paradise Lost* should write such poor Sonnets: – 'Milton, Madam, was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock; but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones.'

On Monday, June 14, and Tuesday, 15, Dr Johnson went to visit Mr Sackville Parker, the bookseller; and when he returned to us, gave the following account of his visit, saying, 'I have been to see my old friend, Sack. Parker; I find he has married his maid; he has done right. She had lived with him many years in great confidence, and they had mingled minds; I do not think he could have found any wife that would have made him so happy. The woman was very attentive and civil to me; she pressed me to fix a day for dining with them, and to say what I liked, and she would be sure to get it for me. Poor Sack! He is very ill, indeed. We parted as never to meet again. It has quite broke me down.' This pathetic narrative was strangely diversified with the grave and earnest defence of a man's having married his maid.

In the morning of Tuesday, June 15, while we sat at Dr Adams's, we talked of a printed letter from the Reverend Herbert Croft, to a young gentleman who had been his pupil, in which he advised him to read to the end of whatever books he should begin to read. JOHNSON. 'This is surely a strange advice; you may as well resolve that whatever men you happen to get acquainted with, you are to keep them for life. A book may be good for nothing; or there may be only one thing in it worth knowing; are we to read it all through? These Voyages, (pointing to the three large volumes of *Voyages to the South Sea*, which were just come out) *who* will read them through? A man had better work his way before the mast, than read them through; they will be eaten

by rats and mice, before they are read through. There can be little entertainment in such books; one set of Savages is like another.' BOSWELL. 'I do not think the people of Otaheité can be reckoned Savages.' JOHNSON. 'Don't cant in defence of Savages.' BOSWELL. 'They have the art of navigation.' JOHNSON. 'A dog or a cat can swim.' BOSWELL. 'They carve very ingeniously.' JOHNSON. 'A cat can scratch, and a child with a nail can scratch.'

On Wednesday, June [16], Dr Johnson and I returned to London; he was not well to-day, and said very little, employing himself chiefly in reading Euripides. He expressed some displeasure at me, for not observing sufficiently the various objects upon the road. 'If I had your eyes, Sir, (said he,) I should count the passengers.' It was wonderful how accurate his observation of visual objects was, notwithstanding his imperfect eyesight, owing to a habit of attention.

After his return to London from this excursion, I saw him frequently, but have few memorandums: I shall therefore here insert some particulars which I collected at various times.

It having been mentioned to Dr Johnson that a gentleman who had a son whom he imagined to have an extreme degree of timidity, resolved to send him to a publick school, that he might acquire confidence; - 'Sir, (said Johnson,) this is a preposterous expedient for removing his infirmity; such a disposition should be cultivated in the shade. Placing him at a publick school is forcing an owl upon day.'

A dull country magistrate [the Mayor of Windsor] gave Johnson a long tedious account of his exercising his criminal jurisdiction, the result of which was his having sentenced four convicts to transportation. Johnson, in an agony of impatience to get rid of such a companion, exclaimed, 'I heartily wish, Sir, that I were a fifth.'

Johnson was present when a tragedy was read, in which there occurred this line: -

'Who rules o'er freemen should himself be free.'

The company having admired it much, 'I cannot agree with you (said Johnson). It might as well be said, -

'Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat.'

Johnson having argued for some time with a pertinacious gentleman; his opponent, who had talked in a very puzzling manner, happened to say, 'I don't understand you, Sir:' upon which Johnson observed, 'Sir, I have found you an argument; but I am not obliged to find you an understanding.'

A foppish physician [probably Sir Lucas Pepys] once reminded Johnson of his having been in company with him on a former occasion. 'I do not remember it, Sir.' The physician still insisted; adding that he that day wore so fine a coat that it must have attracted his notice. 'Sir, (said Johnson,) had you been dipt in Pactolus, I should not have noticed you.'

No man was more ready to make an apology when he had censured unjustly, than Johnson. When a proof-sheet of one of his works was brought to him, he found fault with the mode in which part of it was arranged, refused to read it, and in a passion desired that the compositor might be sent to him. The compositor was Mr Manning, a decent sensible man, who had composed about one half of his *Dictionary*, when in Mr Strahan's printing-house; and a great part of his *Lives of the Poets*, when in that of Mr Nichols; and who (in his seventy-seventh year), when in Mr Baldwin's printing-house, composed a part of the first edition of this work concerning him. By producing the manuscript, he at once satisfied Dr Johnson that he was not to blame. Upon which Johnson candidly and earnestly said to him, 'Mr Compositor, I ask your pardon. Mr Compositor, I ask your pardon, again and again.'

His generous humanity to the miserable was almost beyond example. The following instance is well attested: - Coming home late one night, he found a poor woman lying in the street, so much exhausted that she could not walk; he took her upon his back, and carried her to his house, where he discovered that she was one of those wretched

females who had fallen into the lowest state of vice, poverty, and disease. Instead of harshly upbraiding her, he had her taken care of with all tenderness for a long time, at considerable expence, till she was restored to health, and endeavoured to put her into a virtuous way of living.

He had a great aversion to gesticulating in company. He called once to a gentleman [Sir Richard Musgrave] who offended him in that point, 'Don't *attitudenise*.' And when another gentleman [possibly Joseph Warton] thought he was giving additional force to what he uttered, by expressive movements of his hands, Johnson fairly seized them, and held them down.

A gentleman having said that a *congé d'élire* has not, perhaps, the force of a command, but may be considered only as a strong recommendation, 'Sir, (replied Johnson, who overheard him,) it is such a recommendation, as if I should throw you out of a two-pair-of-stairs window, and recommend to you to fall soft.'

Mr Steevens, who passed many a social hour with him during their long acquaintance, which commenced when they both lived in the Temple, has preserved a good number of particulars concerning him. He has been pleased to favour me with the following, which are original : —

'One evening, previous to the trial of Baretta, a consultation of his friends was held at the house of Mr Cox, the Solicitor, in Southampton-buildings, Chancery-lane. Among others present were, Mr Burke and Dr Johnson, who differed in sentiments concerning the tendency of some part of the defence the prisoner was to make. When the meeting was over, Mr Steevens observed, that the question between him and his friend had been agitated with rather too much warmth. "It may be so, Sir, (replied the Doctor,) for Burke and I should have been of one opinion, if we had had no audience."

'He would sometimes found his dislikes on very slender circumstances. Happening one day to mention Mr [Dr Roger] Flexman, a Dissenting Minister, with some compliment to his exact memory in chronological matters; the Doc-

tor replied, "Let me hear no more of him, Sir. That is the fellow who made the Index to my *Ramblers*, and set down the name of Milton thus : Milton, *Mr John*."

On Tuesday, June 22, I dined with him at THE LITERARY CLUB, the last time of his being in that respectable society. He looked ill; but had such a manly fortitude, that he did not trouble the company with melancholy complaints. They all shewed evident marks of kind concern about him, with which he was much pleased, and he exerted himself to be as entertaining as his indisposition allowed him.

The anxiety of his friends to preserve so estimable a life, as long as human means might be supposed to have influence, made them plan for him a retreat from the severity of a British winter, to the mild climate of Italy. This scheme was at last brought to a serious resolution at General Paoli's, where I had often talked of it. One essential matter, however, I understood was necessary to be previously settled, which was obtaining such an addition to his income, as would be sufficient to enable him to defray the expence in a manner becoming the first literary character of a great nation, and, independent of all his other merits, the Authour of THE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. The person to whom I above all others thought I should apply to negotiate this business, was the Lord Chancellor, because I knew that he highly valued Johnson, and that Johnson highly valued his Lordship; so that it was no degradation of my illustrious friend to solicit for him the favour of such a man. I have mentioned what Johnson said of him to me when he was at the bar; and after his Lordship was advanced to the seals, he said of him, 'I would prepare myself for no man in England but Lord Thurlow. When I am to meet with him I should wish to know a day before.' How he would have prepared himself I cannot conjecture. Would he have selected certain topicks, and considered them in every view so as to be in readiness to argue them at all points? and what may we suppose those topicks to have been? I once started the curious enquiry to the great man who was the subject of this compliment : he smiled, but did not pursue it.

I first consulted with Sir Joshua Reynolds, who perfectly coincided in opinion with me; and I therefore, though personally very little known to his Lordship, wrote to him, stating the case, and requesting his good offices for Dr Johnson. I mentioned that I was obliged to set out for Scotland early in the following week, so that if his Lordship should have any commands for me as to this pious negotiation, he would be pleased to send them before that time; otherwise Sir Joshua Reynolds would give all attention to it.

This application was made not only without any suggestion on the part of Johnson himself, but was utterly unknown to him, nor had he the smallest suspicion of it. Any insinuations, therefore, which since his death have been thrown out, as if he had stooped to ask what was superfluous, are without any foundation. But, had he asked it, it would not have been superfluous; for though the money he had saved proved to be more than his friends imagined, or than I believe he himself, in his carelessness concerning worldly matters, knew it to be, had he travelled upon the Continent, an augmentation of his income would by no means have been unnecessary.

On Friday, June 25, I dined with him at General Paoli's, where, he says in one of his letters to Mrs Thrale, 'I love to dine.' There was a variety of dishes much to his taste, of all which he seemed to me to eat so much, that I was afraid he might be hurt by it; and I whispered to the General my fear, and begged he might not press him. 'Alas! (said the General,) see how very ill he looks; he can live but a very short time. Would you refuse any slight gratifications to a man under sentence of death? There is a humane custom in Italy, by which persons in that melancholy situation are indulged with having whatever they like best to eat and drink, even with expensive delicacies.'

An addition to our company came after we went up to the drawing-room; Dr Johnson seemed to rise in spirits as his audience increased. He said, 'He wished Lord Orford's pictures, and Sir Ashton Lever's Museum, might be purchased by the publick, because both the money, and the pictures,

and the curiosities, would remain in the country; whereas, if they were sold into another kingdom, the nation would indeed get some money, but would lose the pictures and curiosities, which it would be desirable we should have, for improvement in taste and natural history. The only question was, as the nation was much in want of money, whether it would not be better to take a large price from a foreign State?’

He entered upon a curious discussion of the difference between intuition and sagacity; one being immediate in its effect, the other requiring a circuitous process; one he observed was the *eye* of the mind, the other the *nose* of the mind.

A young gentleman [Richard Burke] present took up the argument against him, and maintained that no man ever thinks of the *nose of the mind*, not adverting that though that figurative sense seems strange to us, as very unusual, it is truly not more forced than Hamlet's ‘In my *mind's eye*, Horatio.’ He persisted much too long, and appeared to Johnson as putting himself forward as his antagonist with too much presumption; upon which he called to him in a loud tone, ‘What is it you are contending for, if you *be* contending?’ And afterwards imagining that the gentleman retorted upon him with a kind of smart drollery, he said, ‘Mr [Burke], it does not become you to talk so to me. Besides, ridicule is not your talent; you have *there* neither intuition nor sagacity.’ The gentleman protested that he had intended no improper freedom, but had the greatest respect for Dr Johnson. After a short pause, during which we were somewhat uneasy, — JOHNSON. ‘Give me your hand, Sir. You were too tedious, and I was too short.’ MR [BURKE]. ‘Sir, I am honoured by your attention in any way.’ JOHNSON. ‘Come, Sir, let's have no more of it. We offended one another by our contention; let us not offend the company by our compliments.’

He now said, ‘He wished much to go to Italy, and that he dreaded passing the winter in England.’ I said nothing; but enjoyed a secret satisfaction in thinking that I had taken the

most effectual measures to make such a scheme practicable.

On Monday, June 28, I had the honour to receive from the Lord Chancellor the following letter: —

‘To JAMES BOSWELL, ESQ.

‘SIR, — I should have answered your letter immediately; if, (being much engaged when I received it) I had not put it in my pocket, and forgot to open it till this morning.

‘I am much obliged to you for the suggestion; and I will adopt and press it as far as I can. The best argument, I am sure, and I hope it is not likely to fail, is Dr Johnson’s merit. But it will be necessary, if I should be so unfortunate as to miss seeing you, to converse with Sir Joshua on the sum it will be proper to ask, — in short, upon the means of setting him out. It would be a reflection on us all, if such a man should perish for want of the means to take care of his health. Yours, &c.

‘THURLOW.’

This letter gave me a very high satisfaction; I next day went and shewed it to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was exceedingly pleased with it. He thought that I should now communicate the negociation to Dr Johnson, who might afterwards complain if the attention with which he had been honoured, should be too long concealed from him. I intended to set out for Scotland next morning; but Sir Joshua cordially insisted that I should stay another day, that Johnson and I might dine with him, that we three might talk of his Italian Tour, and, as Sir Joshua expressed himself, ‘have it all out.’ I hastened to Johnson, and was told by him that he was rather better to-day. BOSWELL. ‘I am very anxious about you, Sir, and particularly that you should go to Italy for the winter, which I believe is your own wish.’ JOHNSON. ‘It is, Sir.’ BOSWELL. ‘You have no objection, I presume, but the money it would require.’ JOHNSON. ‘Why, no, Sir.’ Upon which I gave him a particular account of what had been done, and read to him the Lord Chancellor’s letter. He listened with much attention; then warmly said, ‘This is taking prodigious pains about a man.’ ‘O! Sir, (said I, with most sincere affection,) your friends would do every thing

for you.' He paused, grew more and more agitated, till tears started into his eyes, and he exclaimed with fervent emotion, 'God bless you all.' I was so affected that I also shed tears. After a short silence, he renewed and extended his grateful benediction, 'God bless you all, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.' We both remained for some time unable to speak. He rose suddenly and quitted the room, quite melted in tenderness. He staid but a short time, till he had recovered his firmness; soon after he returned I left him, having first engaged him to dine at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, next day. I never was again under that roof which I had so long revered.

On Wednesday, June 30, the friendly confidential dinner with Sir Joshua Reynolds took place, no other company being present. Had I known that this was the last time that I should enjoy in this world, the conversation of a friend whom I so much respected, and from whom I derived so much instruction and entertainment, I should have been deeply affected. When I now look back to it, I am vexed that a single word should have been forgotten.

Both Sir Joshua and I were so sanguine in our expectations, that we expatiated with confidence on the liberal provision which we were sure would be made for him, conjecturing whether munificence would be displayed in one large donation, or in an ample increase of his pension. He himself caught so much of our enthusiasm, as to allow himself to suppose it not impossible that our hopes might in one way or other be realised. He said that he would rather have his pension doubled than a grant of a thousand pounds; 'For, (said he,) though probably I may not live to receive as much as a thousand pounds, a man would have the consciousness that he should pass the remainder of his life in splendour, how long soever it might be.' Considering what a moderate proportion an income of six hundred pounds a year bears to innumerable fortunes in this country, it is worthy of remark, that a man so truly great should think it splendour.

As an instance of extraordinary liberality of friendship, he

told us, that Dr Brocklesby had upon this occasion offered him a hundred a year for his life. A grateful tear started into his eye, as he spoke this in a faltering tone.

Sir Joshua and I endeavoured to flatter his imagination with agreeable prospects of happiness in Italy. 'Nay, (said he,) I must not expect much of that; when a man goes to Italy merely to feel how he breathes the air, he can enjoy very little.'

Our conversation turned upon living in the country, which Johnson, whose melancholy mind required the dissipation of quick successive variety, had habituated himself to consider as a kind of mental imprisonment. 'Yet, Sir, (said I,) there are many people who are content to live in the country.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is in the intellectual world as in the physical world; we are told by natural philosophers that a body is at rest in the place that is fit for it; they who are content to live in the country, are *fit* for the country.'

I accompanied him in Sir Joshua Reynolds's coach, to the entry of Bolt-court. He asked me whether I would not go with him to his house; I declined it, from an apprehension that my spirits would sink. We bade adieu to each other affectionately in the carriage. When he had got down upon the foot-pavement, he called out, 'Fare you well;' and without looking back, sprung away with a kind of pathetick briskness, if I may use that expression, which seemed to indicate a struggle to conceal uneasiness, and impressed me with a foreboding of our long, long separation.

Soon after this time Dr Johnson had the mortification of being informed by Mrs Thrale, that, 'what she supposed he never believed,' was true; namely, that she was actually going to marry Signor Piozzi, an Italian musick-master. He endeavoured to prevent it; but in vain. If she would publish the whole of the correspondence that passed between Dr Johnson and her on the subject, we should have a full view of his real sentiments.⁶ As it is, our judgement must be biassed by that characteristick specimen which Sir John Hawkins has given us: 'Poor Thrale! I thought that either her virtue or her vice would have restrained her from such a marriage.'

She is now become a subject for her enemies to exult over; and for her friends, if she has any left, to forget, or pity.'

It must be admitted that Johnson derived a considerable portion of happiness from the comforts and elegancies which he enjoyed in Mr Thrale's family; but Mrs Thrale assures us he was indebted for these to her husband alone, who certainly respected him sincerely. Her words are, — '*Veneration for his virtue, reverence for his talents, delight in his conversation, and habitual endurance of a yoke my husband first put upon me, and of which he contentedly bore his share for sixteen or seventeen years, made me go on so long with Mr Johnson; but the perpetual confinement I will own to have been terrifying in the first years of our friendship, and irksome in the last; nor could I pretend to support it without help, when my coadjutor was no more.*'

Alas! how different is this from the declarations which I have heard Mrs Thrale make in his life-time, without a single murmur against any peculiarities, or against any one circumstance which attended their intimacy.

As a sincere friend of the great man whose *Life* I am writing, I think it necessary to guard my readers against the mistaken notion of Dr Johnson's character, which this lady's *Anecdotes* of him suggest; for from the very nature and form of her book, 'it lends deception lighter wings to fly.'

I certainly do not claim too much in behalf of my illustrious friend in saying, that however smart and entertaining Mrs Thrale's *Anecdotes* are, they must not be held as good evidence against him; for wherever an instance of harshness and severity is told, I beg leave to doubt its perfect authenticity; for though there may have been *some* foundation for it, yet it may be so exhibited in the narration as to be very unlike the real fact.

The evident tendency of the following anecdote is to represent Dr Johnson as extremely deficient in affection, tenderness, or even common civility: — '*When I one day lamented the loss of a first cousin killed in America, — "Prithee, my dear, (said he,) have done with canting; how would the world be the worse for it, I may ask, if all your*

relations were at once spitted like larks, and roasted for Presto's supper?" – Presto was the dog that lay under the table while we talked.' I suspect this too of exaggeration and distortion. I allow that he made her an angry speech; but let the circumstances fairly appear, as told by Mr Baretti, who was present : –

'Mrs Thrale, while supping very heartily upon larks, laid down her knife and fork, and abruptly exclaimed, "O, my dear Mr Johnson, do you know what has happened? The last letters from abroad have brought us an account that our poor cousin's head was taken off by a cannon-ball." Johnson, who was shocked both at the fact, and her light unfeeling manner of mentioning it, replied, "Madam, it would give you very little concern if all your relations were spitted like those larks, and drest for Presto's supper."'

It is with concern that I find myself obliged to animadvert on the inaccuracies of Mrs Piozzi's *Anecdotes*, and perhaps I may be thought to have dwelt too long upon her little collection. But as from Johnson's long residence under Mr Thrale's roof, and his intimacy with her, the account which she has given of him may have made an unfavourable and unjust impression, my duty, as a faithful biographer, has obliged me reluctantly to perform this unpleasing task.

Having left the *pious negociation*, as I called it, in the best hands, I shall here insert what relates to it. Johnson wrote to Sir Joshua Reynolds on July [8], as follows : –

'I am going, I hope, in a few days, to try the air of Derbyshire, but hope to see you before I go. Let me, however, mention to you what I have much at heart. If the Chancellor should continue his attention to Mr Boswell's request, and confer with you on the means of relieving my languid state, I am very desirous to avoid the appearance of asking money upon false pretences. I desire you to represent to his Lordship, what, as soon as it is suggested, he will perceive to be reasonable, – That, if I grow much worse, I shall be afraid to leave my physicians, to suffer the inconveniences of travel, and pine in the solitude of a foreign country; That, if I grow much better, of which indeed there is now little appearance,

I shall not wish to leave my friends and my domestick comforts; for I do not travel for pleasure or curiosity; yet if I should recover, curiosity would revive. In my present state, I am desirous to make a struggle for a little longer life, and hope to obtain some help from a softer climate. Do for me what you can.'

He wrote to me July 26 : – 'I wish your affairs could have permitted a longer and continued exertion of your zeal and kindness. They that have your kindness may want your ardour. In the mean time I am very feeble and very dejected.'

By a letter from Sir Joshua Reynolds I was informed, that the Lord Chancellor had called on him, and acquainted him that the application had not been successful; but that his Lordship, after speaking highly in praise of Johnson, as a man who was an honour to his country, desired Sir Joshua to let him know, that on granting a mortgage of his pension, he should draw on his Lordship to the amount of five or six hundred pounds; and that his Lordship explained the meaning of the mortgage to be, that he wished the business to be conducted in such a manner, that Dr Johnson should appear to be under the least possible obligation. Sir Joshua mentioned, that he had by the same post communicated all this to Dr Johnson.

How Johnson was affected upon the occasion will appear from what he wrote to Sir Joshua Reynolds : –

'Ashbourne, Sept. 9. Many words I hope are not necessary between you and me, to convince you what gratitude is excited in my heart by the Chancellor's liberality, and your kind offices. ...

'I have enclosed a letter to the Chancellor, which, when you have read it, you will be pleased to seal with a head, or any other general seal, and convey it to him : had I sent it directly to him, I should have seemed to overlook the favour of your intervention.'

TO THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR

MY LORD, – After a long and not inattentive observation

of mankind, the generosity of your Lordship's offer raises in me not less wonder than gratitude. Bounty, so liberally bestowed, I should gladly receive, if my condition made it necessary; for, to such a mind, who would not be proud to own his obligations? But it has pleased GOD to restore me to so great a measure of health, that if I should now appropriate so much of a fortune destined to do good, I could not escape from myself the charge of advancing a false claim. My journey to the continent, though I once thought it necessary, was never much encouraged by my physicians; and I was very desirous that your Lordship should be told of it by Sir Joshua Reynolds, as an event very uncertain; for if I grew much better, I should not be willing, if much worse, not able, to migrate. Your Lordship was first solicited without my knowledge; but, when I was told, that you were pleased to honour me with your patronage, I did not expect to hear of a refusal; yet, as I have had no long time to brood hope, and have not rioted in imaginary opulence, this cold reception has been scarce a disappointment; and, from your Lordship's kindness, I have received a benefit, which only men like you are able to bestow. I shall now live *mihi carior*, [more dear to myself] with a higher opinion of my own merit. I am, my Lord, your Lordship's most obliged, most grateful, and most humble servant,

'September, 1784.'

'SAM. JOHNSON.'

Upon this unexpected failure I abstain from presuming to make any remarks, or to offer any conjectures.

[Soon after this Johnson went to Lichfield where] we now behold him for the last time, in his native city, for which he ever retained a warm affection.

To Mr Henry White, a young clergyman, with whom he now formed an intimacy, so as to talk to him with great freedom, he mentioned that he could not in general accuse himself of having been an undutiful son. 'Once, indeed, (said he,) I was disobedient; I refused to attend my father to Uttoxeter-market. Pride was the source of that refusal, and the remembrance of it was painful. A few years ago, I desired

to atone for this fault; I went to Uttoxeter in very bad weather, and stood for a considerable time bareheaded in the rain, on the spot where my father's stall used to stand. In contrition I stood, and I hope the penance was expiatory.'

Such was his intellectual ardour even at this time, that he said to one friend, 'Sir, I look upon every day to be lost, in which I do not make a new acquaintance;' and to another, when talking of his illness, 'I will be conquered; I will not capitulate.' And such was his love of London, so high a relish had he of its magnificent extent, and variety of intellectual entertainment, that he languished when absent from it, his mind having become quite luxurious from the long habit of enjoying the metropolis; and, therefore, although at Lichfield, surrounded with friends, who loved and revered him, and for whom he had a very sincere affection, he still found that such conversation as London affords, could be found nowhere else. These feelings, joined, probably, to some flattering hopes of aid from the eminent physicians and surgeons in London, who kindly and generously attended him without accepting of fees, made him resolve to return to the capital.

Soon after Johnson's return to the metropolis, both the asthma and dropsy became more violent and distressful. He had for some time kept a journal in Latin of the state of his illness, and the remedies which he used, under the title of *Ægri Ephemeris*, [*A Sick Man's Journal*] which he began on the 6th of July, but continued it no longer than the 8th of November; finding, I suppose, that it was a mournful and unavailing register. It is in my possession; and it written with great care and accuracy.

My readers are now, at last, to behold SAMUEL JOHNSON preparing himself for that doom, from which the most exalted powers afford no exemption to man. Death had always been to him an object of terror; so that, though by no means happy, he still clung to life with an eagerness at which many have wondered. At any time when he was ill, he was very much pleased to be told that he looked better. An ingenious member [William Seward] of the *Eumelian Club*,⁸ informs

me, that upon one occasion when he said to him that he saw health returning to his cheek, Johnson seized him by the hand and exclaimed, 'Sir, you are one of the kindest friends I ever had.'

His great fear of death, and the strange dark manner in which Sir John Hawkins imparts the uneasiness which he expressed on account of offences with which he charged himself, may give occasion to injurious suspicions, as if there had been something of more than ordinary criminality weighing upon his conscience. On that account, therefore, as well as from the regard to truth which he inculcated, I am to mention, (with all possible respect and delicacy, however,) that his conduct, after he came to London, and had associated with Savage and others, was not so strictly virtuous, in one respect, as when he was a younger man.⁹ It was well known, that his amorous inclinations were uncommonly strong and impetuous. He owned to many of his friends, that he used to take women of the town to taverns, and hear them relate their history. In short, it must not be concealed, that, like many other good and pious men, among whom we may place the Apostle Paul upon his own authority, Johnson was not free from propensities which were ever 'warring against the law of his mind,' – and that in his combats with them, he was sometimes overcome.

I heard Dr Johnson once observe, 'There is something noble in publishing truth, though it condemns one's self.' And one who said in his presence, 'he had no notion of people being in earnest in their good professions, whose practice was not suitable to them,' was thus reprimanded by him : – 'Sir, are you so grossly ignorant of human nature as not to know that a man may be very sincere in good principles, without having good practice?'

It is not my intention to give a very minute detail of the particulars of Johnson's remaining days, of whom it was now evident, that the crisis was fast approaching. Yet it will be instructive, as well as gratifying to the curiosity of my readers, to record a few circumstances, on the authenticity of

which they may perfectly rely, as I have been at the utmost pains to obtain an accurate account of his last illness, from the best authority.

Dr Heberden, Dr Brocklesby, Dr Warren, and Dr Butter, physicians, generously attended him, without accepting of any fees, as did Mr Cruikshank, surgeon; and all that could be done from professional skill and ability, was tried, to prolong a life so truly valuable. He himself, indeed, having, on account of his very bad constitution, been perpetually applying himself to medical inquiries, united his own efforts with those of the gentlemen who attended him; and imagining that the dropsical collection of water which oppressed him might be drawn off by making incisions in his body, he, with his usual resolute defiance of pain, cut deep, when he thought that his surgeon had done it too tenderly.¹⁰

Having no near relations, it had been for some time Johnson's intention to make a liberal provision for his faithful servant, Mr Francis Barber, whom he looked upon as particularly under his protection, and whom he had all along treated truly as an humble friend. Having asked Dr Brocklesby what would be a proper annuity to bequeath to a favourite servant, and being answered that it must depend on the circumstances of the master; and, that in the case of a nobleman, fifty pounds a year was considered as an adequate reward for many years' faithful service; 'Then, (said Johnson,) I shall be *nobilissimus*, for I mean to leave Frank seventy pounds a year, and I desire you to tell him so.' It is strange, however, to think, that Johnson was not free from that general weakness of being averse to execute a will, so that he delayed it from time to time; and had it not been for Sir John Hawkins's repeatedly urging it, I think it is probable that his kind resolution would not have been fulfilled.¹¹

The consideration of the numerous papers of which he was possessed, seems to have struck Johnson's mind with a sudden anxiety, and as they were in great confusion, it is much to be lamented that he had not entrusted some faithful and discreet person with the care and selection of them; instead of which, he, in a precipitate manner, burnt large

masses of them, with little regard, as I apprehend, to discrimination. Two very valuable articles, I am sure, we have lost, which were two quarto volumes, containing a full, fair, and most particular account of his own life, from his earliest recollection. I owned to him, that having accidentally seen them, I had read a great deal in them; and apologizing for the liberty I had taken, asked him if I could help it. He placidly answered, 'Why, Sir, I do not think you could have helped it.' I said that I had, for once in my life, felt half an inclination to commit theft. It had come into my mind to carry off those two volumes, and never see him more. Upon my inquiring how this would have affected him, 'Sir, (said he,) I believe I should have gone mad.'

During his last illness, Johnson experienced the steady and kind attachment of his numerous friends. Nobody was more attentive to him than Mr Langton. And I think it highly to the honour of Mr Windham, that his important occupations as an active statesman did not prevent him from paying assiduous respect to the dying Sage, whom he revered.¹² Mr Langton informs me, that, 'one day he found Mr Burke and four or five more friends sitting with Johnson. Mr Burke said to him, "I am afraid, Sir, such a number of us may be oppressive to you." "No, Sir, (said Johnson,) it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state, indeed, when your company would not be a delight to me." Mr Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very tenderly affected, replied, "My dear Sir, you have always been too good to me." Immediately afterwards he went away. This was the last circumstance in the acquaintance of these two eminent men.'

The following particulars of his conversation, within a few days of his death, I give on the authority of Mr John Nichols: —

He said, three or four days only before his death, speaking of the little fear he had of undergoing a surgical operation, "I would give one of these legs for a year more of life, I mean of comfortable life, not such as that which I now suffer;" — and lamented much his inability to read during

his hours of restlessness. "I used formerly, (he added,) when sleepless in bed, *to read like a Turk.*"

Whilst confined by his last illness, it was his regular practice to have the church-service read to him, by some attentive and friendly Divine. The Rev. Mr [Samuel] Hoole performed this kind office in my presence for the last time, when, by his own desire, no more than the Litany was read; in which his responses were in the deep and sonorous voice which Mr Boswell has occasionally noticed, and with the most profound devotion that can be imagined. His hearing not being quite perfect, he more than once interrupted Mr Hoole, with "Louder, my dear Sir, louder, I entreat you, or you pray in vain!" – and, when the service was ended, he, with great earnestness, turned round to an excellent lady [Mrs John Hoole, Samuel's mother] who was present, saying, "I thank you, Madam, very heartily, for your kindness in joining me in this solemn exercise. Live well, I conjure you; and you will not feel the compunction at the last, which I now feel." So truly humble were the thoughts which this great and good man entertained of his own approaches to religious perfection.

Amidst the melancholy clouds which hung over the dying Johnson, his characteristical manner shewed itself on different occasions.

When Dr Warren, in the usual style, hoped that he was better; his answer was, 'No, Sir; you cannot conceive with what acceleration I advance towards death.'

A man whom he had never seen before was employed one night to sit up with him. Being asked next morning how he liked his attendant, his answer was, 'Not at all, Sir: the fellow's an idiot; he is as awkward as a turn-spit when first put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse.'

Mr Windham having placed a pillow conveniently to support him, he thanked him for his kindness, and said, 'That will do, – all that a pillow can do.'

As he opened a note which his servant brought to him, he said, 'An odd thought strikes me: we shall receive no letters in the grave.'

He requested three things of Sir Joshua Reynolds : – To forgive him thirty pounds which he had borrowed of him; to read the Bible; and never to use his pencil on a Sunday. Sir Joshua readily acquiesced.

Indeed he shewed the greatest anxiety for the religious improvement of his friends, to whom he discoursed of its infinite consequence. He begged of Mr Hoole to think of what he had said, and to commit it to writing : and, upon being afterwards assured that this was done, pressed his hands, and in an earnest tone thanked him. Dr Brocklesby having attended him with the utmost assuidity and kindness as his physician and friend, he was peculiarly desirous that this gentleman should not entertain any loose speculative notions, but be confirmed in the truths of Christianity, and insisted on his writing down in his presence, as nearly as he could collect it, the import of what passed on the subject : and Dr Brocklesby having complied with the request, he made him sign the paper, and urged him to keep it in his own custody as long as he lived.

Johnson, with that native fortitude, which, amidst all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, never forsook him, asked Dr Brocklesby, as a man in whom he had confidence, to tell him plainly whether he could recover. ‘Give me (said he,) a direct answer.’ The Doctor having first asked him if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered that he could, declared that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle. ‘Then, (said Johnson,) I will take no more physick, not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to GOD unclouded.’ In this resolution he persevered, and, at the same time, used only the weakest kinds of sustenance. Being pressed by Mr Windham to take somewhat more generous nourishment, lest too low a diet should have the very effect which he dreaded, by debilitating his mind, he said, ‘I will take any thing but inebriating sustenance.’

The Reverend Mr Strahan, who was the son of his friend, and had been always one of his great favourites, had, during his last illness, the satisfaction of contributing to soothe and

comfort him. That gentleman's house, at Islington, of which he is Vicar, afforded Johnson, occasionally and easily, an agreeable change of place and fresh air; and he attended also upon him in town in the discharge of the sacred offices of his profession.

Mr Strahan has given me the agreeable assurance, that, after being in much agitation, Johnson became quite composed, and continued so till his death.

Dr Brocklesby, who will not be suspected of fanaticism, obliged me with the following accounts : –

For some time before his death, all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith, and his trust in the merits and *propitiation* of JESUS CHRIST.

'He talked often to me about the necessity of faith in the *sacrifice* of Jesus, as necessary, beyond all good works whatever, for the salvation of mankind.'

Johnson having thus in his mind the true Christian scheme, at once rational and consolatory, uniting justice and mercy in the DIVINITY, with the improvement of human nature, previous to his receiving the Holy Sacrament in his apartment, composed and fervently uttered this prayer : –

'Almighty and most merciful Father, I am now, as to human eyes, it seems, about to commemorate, for the last time, the death of thy Son JESUS CHRIST, our Saviour and Redeemer. Grant, O LORD, that my whole hope and confidence may be in his merits, and thy mercy; enforce and accept my imperfect repentance; make this commemoration available to the confirmation of my faith, the establishment of my hope, and the enlargement of my charity; and make the death of thy Son JESUS CHRIST effectual to my redemption. Have mercy upon me, and pardon the multitude of my offences. Bless my friends; have mercy upon all men. Support me, by thy Holy Spirit, in the days of weakness, and at the hour of death; and receive me, at my death, to everlasting happiness, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST. Amen.'

Having, as has been already mentioned, made his will on the 8th and 9th of December, and settled all his worldly affairs, he languished till Monday, the 13th of that month, when he expired, about seven o'clock in the evening, with so little apparent pain that his attendants hardly perceived when his dissolution took place.

Of his last moments, my brother, Thomas David, has furnished me with the following particulars : —

'The Doctor, from the time that he was certain his death was near, appeared to be perfectly resigned, was seldom or never fretful or out of temper, and often said to his faithful servant, who gave me this account, "Attend, Francis, to the salvation of your soul, which is the object of greatest importance : " he also explained to him passages in the scripture, and seemed to have pleasure in talking upon religious subjects.

'On Monday, the 13th of December, the day on which he died, a Miss [Valentine] Morris, daughter to a particular friend of his [Corbyn Morris],¹³ called, and said to Francis, that she begged to be permitted to see the Doctor, that she might earnestly request him to give her his blessing. Francis went into his room, followed by the young lady, and delivered the message. The Doctor turned himself in the bed, and said, "God bless you, my dear!" These were the last words he spoke. His difficulty of breathing increased till about seven o'clock in the evening, when Mr Barber and Mrs Desmoulins, who were sitting in the room, observing that the noise he made in breathing had ceased, went to the bed, and found he was dead.'

A few days before his death, he had asked Sir John Hawkins, as one of his executors, where he should be buried; and on being answered, 'Doubtless, in Westminster Abbey,' seemed to feel a satisfaction, very natural to a Poet.

Accordingly, upon Monday, December 20, his remains were deposited in that noble and renowned edifice; and over his grave was placed a large blue flag-stone, with this inscription : —

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'SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

Obiit xiii die Decembris,

Anno Domini

M.DCC.LXXXIV.

Ætatis suæ LXXV.³

NOTES

I. 1709-48 (pages 35-62)

1. The baptism took place so quickly because it was not expected that the child would survive. His aunt Jane confessed that she 'would not have picked such a poor creature up in the street.'

2. Johnson's life of Sydenham appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1742.

3. Cornelius Ford was later to achieve notoriety as the convivial, pipe-smoking parson who presides over the punch bowl at the drunken party in Hogarth's *A Modern Midnight Conversation*.

4. Elizabeth Desmoulins's husband, a Huguenot refugee, was a master at the Birmingham Free Grammar School. In later years she lived almost entirely upon the charity of Johnson who gave her a home and half a guinea a week.

5. In Johnson's opinion Sir Wolstan Dixey was an 'abandoned, brutal rascal'. His reputation for violence and ignorance was fully deserved. He was said to have once attended a levee at one of the royal palaces where, upon hearing the announcement, 'Sir Wolstan Dixey of Boswell Park', George II, dredging up some recollection of Bosworth Field from his muddled knowledge of English history, remarked 'Bosworth - Bosworth! Big battle at Bosworth, wasn't it?' 'Yes, Sir,' replied Sir Wolstan, 'But I thrashed him.'

6. Garrick unkindly described Tetty as 'a little painted puppet of no value at all, quite disguised with affectation, full of odd airs and rural elegance . . . flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and her general behaviour'. But, though undoubtedly affected, she seems not, in fact, to have been physically unattractive and certainly not stupid.

7. 'I have beat many a fellow,' Johnson remarked complacently when reminded of this incident in his old age, 'but the rest had the wit to hold their tongues.'

8. Johnson was deeply attached to Richard Bathurst, a young, rather feckless physician born in Jamaica. He was 'a fine fellow, a man to my heart's content', Johnson said. 'He hated a fool and he

hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig: he was a very good hater.' Having failed to make a living from medicine in London, Bathurst joined the Army as a surgeon and died of fever in the expedition against Havannah. Johnson remembered him in his prayers more often than any other man, and could scarcely speak of him without tears starting to his eyes. He loved him 'before all living creatures'.

9. John Hawkesworth had been one of Cave's contributors at St John's Gate. He was extremely adept at imitating Johnson's style.

10. The brief description, 'an attorney', was intended as a slight to Boswell's rival. But Hawkins was a man of many parts, a clever lawyer and a good writer. Hard working, serious and strait-laced, he was certainly 'a most *unclubable* man' and Johnson was inclined to poke fun at him. When Mrs Thrale and some of her guests were denigrating him, Johnson playfully came to his defence: 'As to Sir John, why really I believe him to be an honest man at the bottom: but to be sure he is penurious, and he is mean, and it must be owned he has a degree of brutality, and a tendency to savageness, that cannot easily be defended.' All the same, Johnson thought sufficiently well of him to appoint him one of his executors and to welcome him to his bedside when he was dying.

II. 1749-62 (pages 65-89)

1. Mahomet was, in fact, played by Spranger Barry. Garrick took the part of Demetrius.

2. Anna Williams may be found in the *Dictionary of National Biography* on the strength of her friendship with Johnson, the quality of her poetry being negligible. She was the daughter of Zachariah Williams, an impoverished apothecary who had persuaded himself that he had discovered the means of ascertaining longitude at sea by magnetism. Johnson wrote for him a treatise setting out this theory which was published under Williams's name.

3. Johnson's Negro servant, Francis Barber, was the son of a slave and had himself been bought as a slave by Richard Bathurst's father, a planter and colonel in the Jamaican militia. When Colonel Bathurst returned to England he had brought Barber with him and had sent him to a village school in Yorkshire. Upon the Colonel's death he had received his freedom, together with a bequest of £12, and had apparently gone to live with Richard

Bathurst in London. Bathurst could not afford to keep him, so Johnson agreed to take him into service.

4. Johnson remained fond of Elizabeth Carter, a gifted poet and prose writer, for the rest of his life. He did not usually much care for the company of women whose cleverness was all they had to recommend them. 'A man is generally better pleased,' he thought, 'when he has a good dinner on his table than when his wife talks Greek.' But Elizabeth Carter, an attractive girl, 'could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem.'

5. Catharine Macaulay, a tall young blue-stocking, the wife of a Scottish physician, was not so much to Johnson's taste as Elizabeth Carter. Her republican sympathies were too pronounced and her manner too argumentative.

6. Like Anna Williams (as well as Topham Beauclerk and Bennet Langton) Levett earned a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography* purely on the strength of his friendship with Johnson. According to an obituarist in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 'his person was middle-sized and thin; his visage swarthy, adult and corrugated. His conversation, except on professional subjects, barren. When in deshabelle, he might have been taken for an alchemist, whose complexion had been hurt by the fumes of the crucible, and whose clothes had suffered from the sparks of the furnace.' Sir John Hawkins described him as 'one of the lowest practitioners in the art of healing that ever sought a livelihood by it.'

7. Thomas Warton was Langton's tutor at Trinity College.

8. *Net* is defined in the *Dictionary* as 'anything reticulated or decussated at equal distances, with interstices between the inter-sections'.

9. The definitions are *Whig*: 'The name of a faction'. *Pension*: 'An allowance made to anyone without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country.' *Oats*: 'A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.' *Excise*: 'A hateful tax levied upon commodities.'

10. Robert Vansittart, then thirty-one years old and a Fellow of All Souls, was to become Regius Professor of Civil Law. He was a man of most debauched habits and a member of the Hell-Fire Club. It was he who presented to the Club the baboon to which Sir Francis Dashwood used to administer the Eucharist.

11. Johnson's enthusiastic reception of King's speech was due to

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the fact that it was given on the occasion of the installation of the Jacobite Earl of Westmorland as Chancellor.

12. Smollett, whose *Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* had been published in 1751, had once been a ship's surgeon.

13. Arthur Murphy, the author and actor, published a biography of Johnson in 1792.

14. Alexander Wedderburn, later 1st Baron Loughborough and 1st Earl of Rosslyn, was a close friend of the Prime Minister.

III. 1763 (pages 93-122)

1. Boswell had spent much of the early part of June in pursuit of a Miss Temple, 'an exceedingly pretty' and 'very amorous' girl who, while 'kept by a man of £4,000 a year', was said to be 'kind to her favourites without any views of interest'. This had not, however, prevented Boswell from celebrating the King's birthday on 4 June by venturing forth in dirty buckskin breeches, an old shirt and 'a little round hat with tarnished silver lace belonging to a disbanded officer of the Royal Volunteers', and by picking up a 'low brimstone' in the Park and 'agreeing with her for sixpence'. Later the same night in the Strand he 'picked up a little profligate wretch' to whom he also gave sixpence; then, in Whitehall he found yet another girl, told her he was a penniless highwayman and 'begged she would trust [him]'. This sort of adventure, he confessed, rendered him 'very lazy and disposed to relish ease' rather than to pursue his acquaintance with Johnson.

2. When Goldsmith got home he attempted to demonstrate how much better he could jump over a stick than these puppets could. He fell over and broke his shin.

3. John Ogilvie, a Presbyterian minister, was also a very poor poet. When Boswell asked Johnson if he might introduce him, Johnson 'obligingly agreed; adding, however, with a sly pleasantry, "but he must give us none of his poetry."'

4. James Macpherson was a particular *bête noire* of Johnson who denied the authenticity of his translations of Ossianic poems.

5. Boswell did not feel himself on this occasion. He had sat up the whole of the previous night and had spent the night before that with 'a fine fresh lass', an officer's daughter, who had tapped him on the shoulder in the Strand. 'My want of sleep sat heavy on me,' he recorded in his journal, 'and made me like to nod, even in Mr Johnson's company.'

1. Christopher Nugent, a Roman Catholic physician born in Ireland, was an authority on hydrophobia. Edmund Burke married his daughter. He was regular in his attendance at the Literary Club, all of whose members were fond of him. Johnson deeply regretted his death.

2. Anthony Chamier, formerly engaged on the Stock Exchange, was appointed Deputy Secretary at War in 1772. He had a country house at Streatham where Johnson was a frequent visitor and was to spend his seventieth birthday.

3. Henry Thrale had inherited the business from his father who, having made a fortune from it, had been able to give his son an excellent education and to send him on the Grand Tour with a splendid allowance. Tall, silent and authoritative, Henry Thrale was not a man to arouse deep affection. 'I think his servants do not much love him,' his wife recorded, 'and I am not sure that his Children feel much Affection for him: low People almost all agree to abhor him, as he has not of that . . . cordial Manner which is universally required by them - nor any Skill to dissemble his dislike of their Coarseness . . . Johnson has a great Degree of Kindness and Esteem for him, and says if he would talk more, his *Manner* would be very completely that of a perfect Gentleman.'

4. The King's library of 65,000 volumes came into possession of the Trustees of the British Museum during the reign of George IV. The Trustees received a grant of £120,000 from Parliament to build an extension to the Museum in which the books could be housed.

5. Catharine Chambers came to the Johnsons' as a maidservant when she was fifteen. At the time of his mother's death Johnson wrote to his step-daughter, Lucy Porter, asking her to tell Kitty that he would never forget her tenderness for her mistress.

6. Baretti was Italian tutor to the Thrales' daughter, Queeney; and in this capacity accompanied them and Johnson on a trip to France. Sir Joshua Reynolds's sister, Frances, thought that Johnson and Baretti never got on well together again after this trip and that what perhaps 'entirely extinguished' their friendship was 'a most mendacious falsehood that Barreti told Johnson about his having twice beaten the South-Sea Islander, Omai, at chess; for the very reverse was true'.

'Do you think,' he said to Johnson, 'that I should be conquered at chess by a savage?'

'I know you were.'

Baretti continued to insist upon the contrary which brought Johnson from his seat in a most violent rage, crying 'I'll hear no more.' In a fright, Baretti flew out of the house, Miss Williams told Miss Reynolds, 'and perhaps never entered it after. I believe he was never invited.'

Baretti, for his part, never afterwards spoke of Johnson with his earlier reverence. 'Johnson is a nasty old man [*un vecchiaccio*],' he told his brothers the following year, 'a giant both in body and mind, always absent-minded, fierce, touchy, dirty, full of unpleasant habits, always shifting his body when he is seated, and always moving his jaw like an ox chewing the cud; but as he is rightly believed to possess more learning than any other man in this kingdom, he is feared and respected by all, perhaps more than he is loved. Although he is a great critic in French, and knows almost as much Italian as I do, he can speak neither language; but he speaks Latin as vehemently as Cicero...'

Despite their differences, when Barreti faced trial for having stabbed a whore's bully to death in the Haymarket, Johnson went to visit him in Newgate and bore testimony in court to the quietness of his general character. He was acquitted.

7. Boswell was subsequently told he was mistaken about Miss Williams's manner of satisfying herself that the cups were full. 'She had acquired,' he was informed, 'such a niceness of touch, as to know, by the feeling of the outside of the cup, how near it was to being full.' Certainly she must have had much practice: Johnson's passion for tea led him to drink as many as twelve cups at a sitting; and once he claimed to have drunk twenty-five.

8. Steevens, the critic and commentator on Shakespeare, assiduously cultivated the friendship of Johnson who, though well aware of his faults and mischievous cynicism, nominated him for membership of The Club in February 1774 and of the Essex Head Club in 1783.

9. Tyers, a dilettante author, was a great favourite with Johnson who said that he learned something new from him every time he met him. It was Tyers who said that Johnson always spoke as if he were talking on oath.

10. He also carried an enormous stick which he looked capable of wielding with great force.

1. No one was quite sure what these chemical experiments entailed, but they seemed mainly to do with the distilling of various substances such as peppermint and the dregs of strong beer from which he extracted a potent and very nauseous spirit that few of his visitors could be persuaded to taste, though none could fail to smell. He also conducted experiments on his own body, shaving the hairs on his arms and chest to see how long it took them to grow, measuring the length of a cut finger nail so that, as he recorded in his journal, he might 'know the growth of nails'.

2. Johnson, in an amusing conversation with Mr and Mrs Thrale, described the management of his kitchen:

'And pray, sir,' Mr Thrale asked him. 'Who is clerk of your kitchen?'

'Why, sir, I am afraid there is none; a general anarchy prevails in my kitchen, as I am told by Mr Levett who says it is not now what it used to be.'

'Mr Levett, I suppose, sir, has the office of keeping the hospital in health, as he is an apothecary?'

'Levett, madam, is a brutal fellow, but I have a good regard for him.'

'But how do you get your dinners drest?'

'Why, Desmoulins has the chief management of the kitchen; but our roasting is not magnificent, for we have no jack.'

'No jack! Why how do they manage without?'

'Small joints, I believe, they manage with a string, and larger are done at the tavern. I have some thoughts (with a profound gravity) of buying a jack, because I think a jack is some credit to a house.'

'Well, but you'll have a spit, too?'

'No, sir, no. That would be superfluous, for we shall never use it; and if a jack is seen a spit will be presumed.'

3. James Elphinston was Strahan's brother-in-law. At his school in Kensington he 'educated young gentlemen under sixteen at 25l. a year, and above that age in proportion'. The school was not successful and Elphinston gave it up in 1776.

4. Sir John Dalrymple, the Scottish judge, was the author of *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*.

5. Lady Diana Beauclerk, daughter of the second Duke of Marlborough, had been unfaithful to her first husband, Frederick St John.

6. Robert Chambers was Blackstone's successor as Vinerian Professor of Law at Oxford.

7. *Taxation No Tyranny* seems very harsh, unreasonable and shortsighted now, a commendation of discipline and obedience almost for their own sakes. But many other intelligent and responsible men, both in England and America, shared the views expressed in it. What they principally objected to was the Americans' refusal to pay taxes, which were by no means burdensome, to a country protecting their interests.

8. In a letter to his friend, Hill Boothby, Johnson – as one who had 'thought much in Medicine' – recommended this 'very probable remedy for indigestion and lubricity of the bowels': 'Take an ounce of dried orange peel, divide it into scruples ($\frac{1}{3}$ dram), and take one scruple at a time in any manner; the best way is perhaps to drink it in a glass of hot red port.' This is, no doubt, the explanation of Johnson's collection which puzzled Boswell and Lady Diana Beauclerk.

9. Sir Joshua Reynolds lived at 47 Leicester Fields (now Leicester Square) from 1760 until his death.

10. Madame du Boccage, a correspondent of Chesterfield, translated Milton into French. She was on friendly terms with Voltaire and Condorcet. Having tea with her was the nearest contact Johnson made with the *philosophes*.

VI. 1776 (pages 195–224)

1. It was in Hawkins's presence, not Boswell's, that Johnson uttered the memorable opinion that 'a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity.'

2. Sampson Lloyd, a Quaker, was the founder of Lloyd's Bank.

3. This house is now the Johnson Birthplace Museum.

4. Johnson had not always spoken of Robert James, his old schoolfellow, so kindly in James's lifetime. Said to have been drunk every day for twenty years, James was also a notorious womanizer. The Rev. Thomas Campbell recorded in his diary, 'Dr James, (who is it seems a very lewd fellow . . .) . . . in a coach with his whoor, took up Johnson and set him down at a given place – Johnson, hearing afterwards what the lady was, attacked James, when next he met him for carrying him about in such company – James apologized by saying that he always took a swelling in his stones if he abstained a month etc. – Damn the rascal says Johnson.'

Between drinking and whoring James found time to compile a

NOTES

medical dictionary in three stout volumes with which Johnson helped him.

5. Imlac is the much-travelled old philosopher in Johnson's *Rasselas*.

6. Boswell was referring to a dinner at Wilton, the Earl of Pembroke's house.

7. It was Dr Lettsom who said of Johnson, 'he had a heavy look, but when he spoke it was like lightening out of a dark cloud.'

VII. 1777-8 (pages 227-60)

1. Dr William Dodd - on whose behalf Johnson composed several papers although they had only met once - was hanged for forgery.

2. James Fieldhouse was the son of Walter John Fieldhouse whom Boswell describes elsewhere as a 'gentleman farmer'. Dr Taylor undertook the education of the boy.

3. The arrival of Poll Carmichael, a 'Scotch wench', at Johnson's house was far from welcome to its other inhabitants who had good cause to consider it overpopulated already. In particular Poll's advent annoyed Mrs Desmoulins who was required to share her room with her, although she was already sharing it with her daughter. Miss Williams also strongly disapproved of the new arrival. But then as Johnson explained, 'Williams hates everybody.' 'Levett hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams,' he continued; 'Desmoulins hates them both; Poll loves none of them.'

Johnson gave his own opinion of Poll Carmichael to Henry Thrale:

'And, pray, sir, who is the Poll you talk of? ...'

'Why, I took to Poll very well at first, but she won't do upon a nearer examination.'

'How came she among you, sir?'

'Why, I don't rightly remember, but we could spare her very well from us. Poll is a stupid slut. I had some hopes of her at first. But when I talked to her tightly and closely, I could make nothing of her. She was wiggle-waggle and I could never persuade her to be categorical.'

4. John Hill, who called himself 'Sir' John as a member of the Swedish Order of Vasa, was a versatile man of unscrupulous char-

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acter. Writer, apothecary, botanist, gardener, actor and quack doctor, he was not, however, as Dilly asserted, author of Mrs Glasse's *The Art of Cookery*.

5. After his meeting with Edwards, Johnson noted in his diary: 'My purpose is to continue our acquaintance.'

6. Mauritius Lowe, the painter, was a natural son of Lord Southwell. Johnson, who was godfather to his children, went out of his way to help him. In 1783, when a large picture he had painted was refused for exhibition at the Royal Academy, Johnson used his influence with Reynolds to get the decision of the Council reversed.

7. 4,000 copies were sold 'very quickly' of the first edition of the *Journey to the Hebrides*.

VIII. 1779-81 (pages 263-80)

1. Boswell was unable to visit London in 1780. He asked Johnson to meet him in the north of England; but Johnson was unwilling to leave the Thrales. 'This year,' he told Boswell, 'must pass without an interview.'

2. This was an anonymous biography printed for George Kearsley and published in 1785.

3. Garrick had died at 5 Adelphi Terrace on 20 January 1779.

IX. 1782-3 (pages 283-309)

1. Mrs Thrale, to Johnson's fury, was soon to marry the handsome Italian singer, Gabriel Piozzi, with whom she had been in love for some time.

2. William Windham, shortly to be elected Member of Parliament for Norwich, became one of Johnson's closest friends during these last years.

3. Edmund Allen, the printer, was Johnson's landlord at Bolt Court. He lived next door.

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X. 1784 (pages 313-41)

1. This was the Essex Head Club. The former servant of the Thrales who kept the Essex Head was Samuel Greaves.

2. George Strahan was the second son of William Strahan, the printer.

3. Johnson had always been fond of Charlotte Lennox, the American-born former actress for whose *Shakespeare Illustrated* he had written the dedication. In 1751, to celebrate the publication of her first novel, *Harriot Stuart*, he had given a party for her at the Devil Tavern. It was a very gay party which had gone on all night until eight o'clock the next morning, and during the course of it a huge apple pie had been placed on the table. He had caused this pie to be stuck with bay leaves and he had made for her a crown of laurel with which he encircled her brow, his face shining with 'meridian splendour', a guest recalled, 'though his drink had only been lemonade'.

4. Boswell subsequently learned that Johnson's claim 'was not well-founded'.

5. Mrs Kennicott was the widow of the Biblical scholar, Dr Benjamin Kennicott, whose 'consummate industry and diligence' were commended by Johnson.

6. At the beginning of July Mrs Thrale had confirmed the rumours to which up till then Johnson had chosen to close his mind. She begged pardon, she wrote, 'for concealing from you a Connection which you must have heard of by many, but I suppose never believed . . . Indeed, my dear Sir, it was concealed only to save needless pain; I could not have borne to reject that Council it would have killed me to take; and I can only tell it you now, because it is all irrevocably settled, and out of your power to prevent.'

Johnson's reaction was ferocious. In a cruel letter, he replied:

If I interpret your letter right, you are ignominiously married, if it is yet undone, let us once [more] talk together. If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness; if you have forfeited your Fame and your country, may your folly do no further mischief. If the last act is yet to do, I who have loved you, esteemed you, revered you, and served you, I who long thought you the first of human kind entreat that before your fate is irrevocable, I may once more see you. I was, I once was, Madam, most truly yours, Sam: Johnson.

To this letter, Mrs Thrale replied in an injured but dignified tone :

I have this morning received from you so rough a letter in reply to one which was both tenderly and respectfully written, that I am forced to desire the conclusion of a correspondence which I can bear to continue no longer. The birth of my second husband is not meaner than that of my first; his sentiments are not meaner; his profession is not meaner . . . It is want of fortune then that is ignominious; the character of the man I have chosen has no other claim to such an epithet. The religion to which he has always been a zealous adherent will, I hope, teach him to forgive insults he has not deserved; mine will, I hope, enable me to bear them at once with dignity and patience. To hear that I have forfeited my fame is indeed the greatest insult I ever yet received. My fame is as unsullied as snow, or I should think it unworthy of him who must henceforward protect it.

I write by the coach the more speedily and effectually to prevent your coming hither. Perhaps by my fame (and I hope it is so) you mean only that celebrity which is a consideration of a much lower kind. I care for that only as it may give pleasure to my husband and his friends.

Farewell, dear Sir, and accept my best wishes. You have always commanded my esteem, and long enjoyed the fruits of a friendship never infringed by one harsh expression on my part during twenty years of familiar talk. Never did I oppose your will, or control your wish; nor can your unmerited severity itself lessen my regard; but till you have changed your opinion of Mr Piozzi let us converse no more. God bless you.

Johnson's reply was more temperate than his first outburst. He lamented her conduct, but hoped that God would grant her every blessing; he advised her to settle in England where she might live with more security and dignity than in Italy; and he reminded her of the attempt by the Archbishop of St Andrews to dissuade Mary Queen of Scots from seeking shelter in England: 'The Queen went forward . . . If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no further . . . The tears stand in my eyes.'

A week before her marriage, Mrs Thrale wrote to Johnson again to thank him most sincerely for this last 'sweetly kind' letter, and to assure him that Mr Piozzi, 'a religious Man, a sober Man and a thinking Man', would never injure her. 'Let nobody injure him in your good opinion, which he is most solicitous to obtain and to preserve,' she concluded, 'and the harsh Letter you wrote me at first grieved him to the very heart. Accept his Esteem my dear Sir, do; and his Promise to treat with long continued Respect and

Tenderness the Friend with whom you once honoured with your Regard and who will never cease to be my dear Sir your truly affectionate and faithful servant.'

Johnson rejected the opportunity of reconciliation; he did not answer the letter, nor ever wrote to her again. For the rest of his life he did not like to hear her name mentioned. When John Hawkins's daughter mentioned it and supposed that he would be seeing her again shortly, he roared out, 'I know nothing of Mrs Thrale . . . Why should you suppose so? Good evening to you.' And he stormed out of the house. When Fanny Burney indelicately asked if he ever heard from her, he cried out in anguish. 'No, nor write to her. I drive her quite from my mind. If I meet with one of her letters. I burn it instantly. I have burnt all I can find. I never speak of her, and I desire never to hear of her more. I drive her, as I said, wholly from my mind.' Fanny always remembered how his great body had turned convulsively, how his eyes had rolled and his chest had heaved as he struggled to find words to express his anger; and how, in the end, he had been able to utter no more than the single, explosive word, 'Piozzi!'

It should be added that an important factor in Johnson's reaction was Piozzi's Roman Catholicism. Mrs Thrale would have to change her religion simply in order to marry him and not from conviction.

7. As against this, it should be noted that as late as the summer of 1780, Mrs Thrale recorded: 'Johnson and I have been uncomfortably parted this year, we never lived asunder so long since our first Connection I think, yet our mutual Regard does not decay that's certain - how should it? founded on the truest principles, Religion, Virtue and Community of Ideas - saucy Soul! Community of Ideas with Dr Johnson; but why not? he has fastened so many of his own Notions so on my Mind before this Time, that I am not certain whether they grew there originally or no: of this I am sure, that they are the best and wisest Notions I possess; that I love the Author of them with a firm Affection; such is my tenderness for Johnson, when he is out of my sight I always keep his Books about me, which I never think of reading at any other Time: but they remind me of *him* and please me more than even his letters.'

8. The Eumelian Club was founded by the physician, John Ash, in honour of whose name it was so called from the Greek Εὐμελίας

9. It seems that Boswell made this suggestion having seen the

two quarto volumes he later describes. Hawkins also saw these volumes and slipped one of them into his pocket, excusing himself on the grounds that he meant to keep it out of the hands of George Steevens who, if he found it, would 'make an ill use of it'. Johnson was extremely angry when he discovered what Hawkins had done and said to him – as he said to Boswell – that he would 'probably have run mad' if he had missed the book and not known who had it.

10. 'Deeper, deeper!' Johnson cried out to Cruikshank when the surgeon scarified his leg with what the patient considered excessive timidity. 'I will abide the consequence: You are afraid of your reputation, but that is nothing to me.' Eventually he determined to take the treatment into his own hands. He asked Frank and Mrs Desmoulins to bring him a case from which he selected a lancet and conveyed it beneath the bedclothes. They begged him not to injure himself and there seems to have been a struggle in which, according to William Windham's account, Johnson grew 'very outrageous, so as to call Frank scoundrel and threaten Desmoulins that he would stab him'. Eventually they managed to get him to agree that he would not do anything rash. 'But under the bedclothes,' John Hawkins recorded, having interviewed Frank about it, 'they saw his hand move. Upon this they turned down the clothes, and saw a great effusion of blood, which soon stopped . . . Soon after he got a pair of scissors that lay in a drawer by him, and plunged them deep in the calf of each leg . . . Immediately they sent for Mr Cruikshank, and the apothecary, and they, or one of them, dressed his wounds.'

11. Barber died in Stafford Infirmary in 1801. A man who met him towards the end of his life said that the once handsome young man, 'eminent for his success among girls', had now lost all his teeth, was 'aged and infirm' with his 'cloaths the worse for wear'. 'He spends his time in fishing and cultivating a few potatoes . . . He laments that he has lost the countenance and table of Miss S[ewar]d . . . and many other respectable good friends, through his own imprudence and low connexions . . . Mr Barber appears modest and humble, but to have associated with company superior to his rank in life.'

He had, with the help of his English wife, Betsy, kept a school for a time; and after his death Betsy ran a school of her own at Lichfield. But it appears not to have been a great success, as she was obliged to sell both a miniature of Johnson which he had

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given her and various of his manuscripts which had also come into her possession.

12. Windham, who was soon to become Secretary at War, was one of Burke's principal allies in the House of Commons.

13. Corbyn Morris, a Commissioner of Customs, was the author of *Essay on Wit, Humour and Ridicule*.

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